

SIGHT AND SOUND

SPRING 1969 * 5/- 1\$



The Films of Jan Troell

INTERLUDE IN THE MARSHLAND

30 mins
Director: Jan Troell

Sweden
subtitles £3 10 0

With: Max von Sydow
Available in Cinemascope only

A strongly atmospheric short by Jan Troell with Max von Sydow in the role of an enigmatic brakesman who deserts his train at a lonely wayside halt, and the mystification his actions cause to his workmates and other observers. With the superb photography and musical score to be expected from the director of *HERE IS YOUR LIFE* and *OLE DOLE DOFF*.

HERE IS YOUR LIFE (Här Har du Ditt Liv)

Sweden

167 mins part-colour subtitles £12 10 0
Director: Jan Troell

With: Per Oscarsson, Max von Sydow
Eddie Axberg, Ulla Sjöblom

An immensely moving account of a boy's growth to maturity in the rural Sweden of fifty years ago. His first encounters with life, romance, tragedy and death. Tender, truthful, beautifully acted and with a memorable musical score. This one film projected Jan Troell into the foremost ranks of international directors, an eminence since confirmed with *OLE DOLE DOFF*.

Berlin Festival 1967; San Francisco Festival 1968

OLE DOLE DOFF (Who Saw Him Die?)

Sweden

105 mins subtitles 'X' £12 10 0
Director: Jan Troell

With: Per Oscarsson, Kerstin Tidelius
Ann-Marie Gyllenspetz

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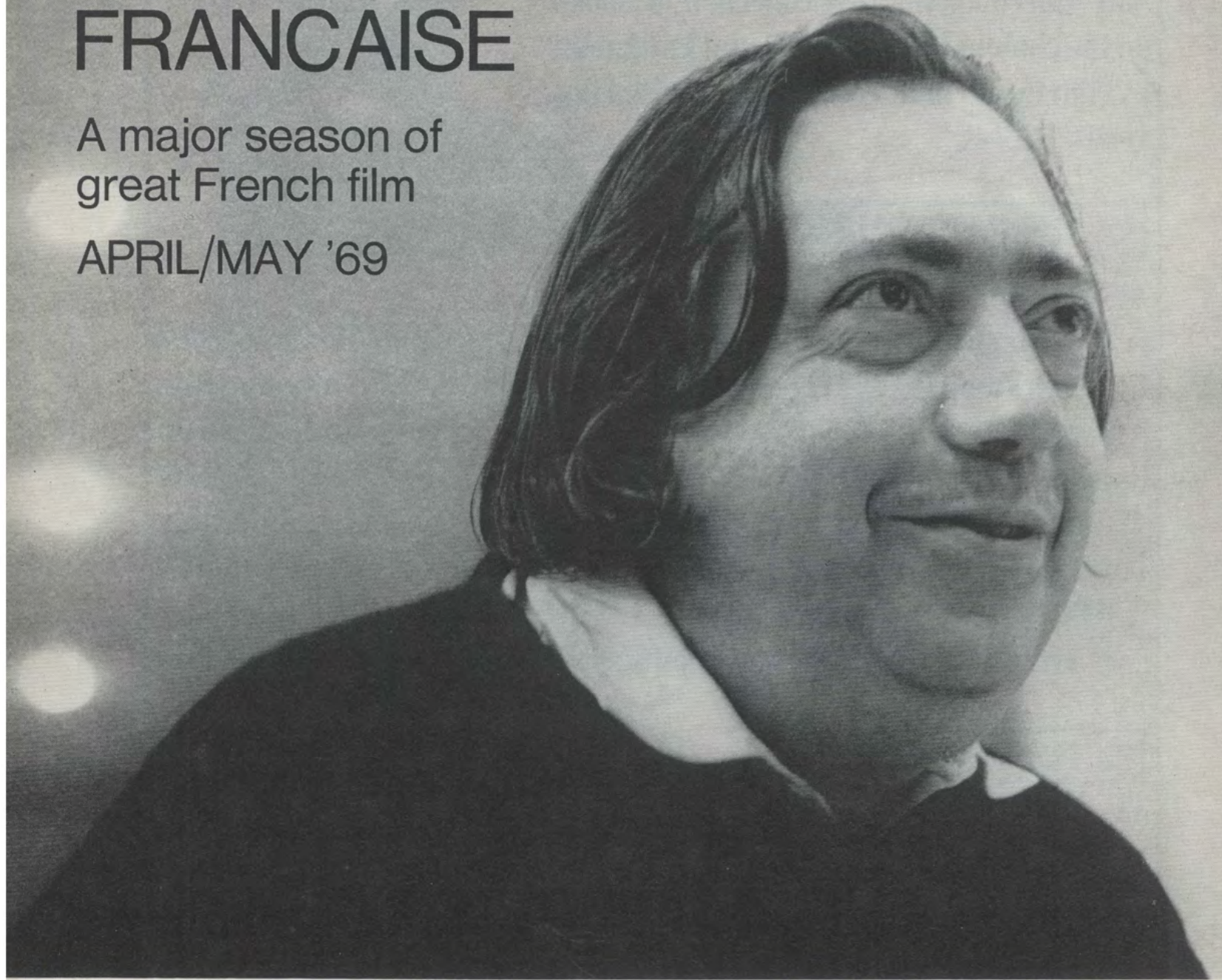
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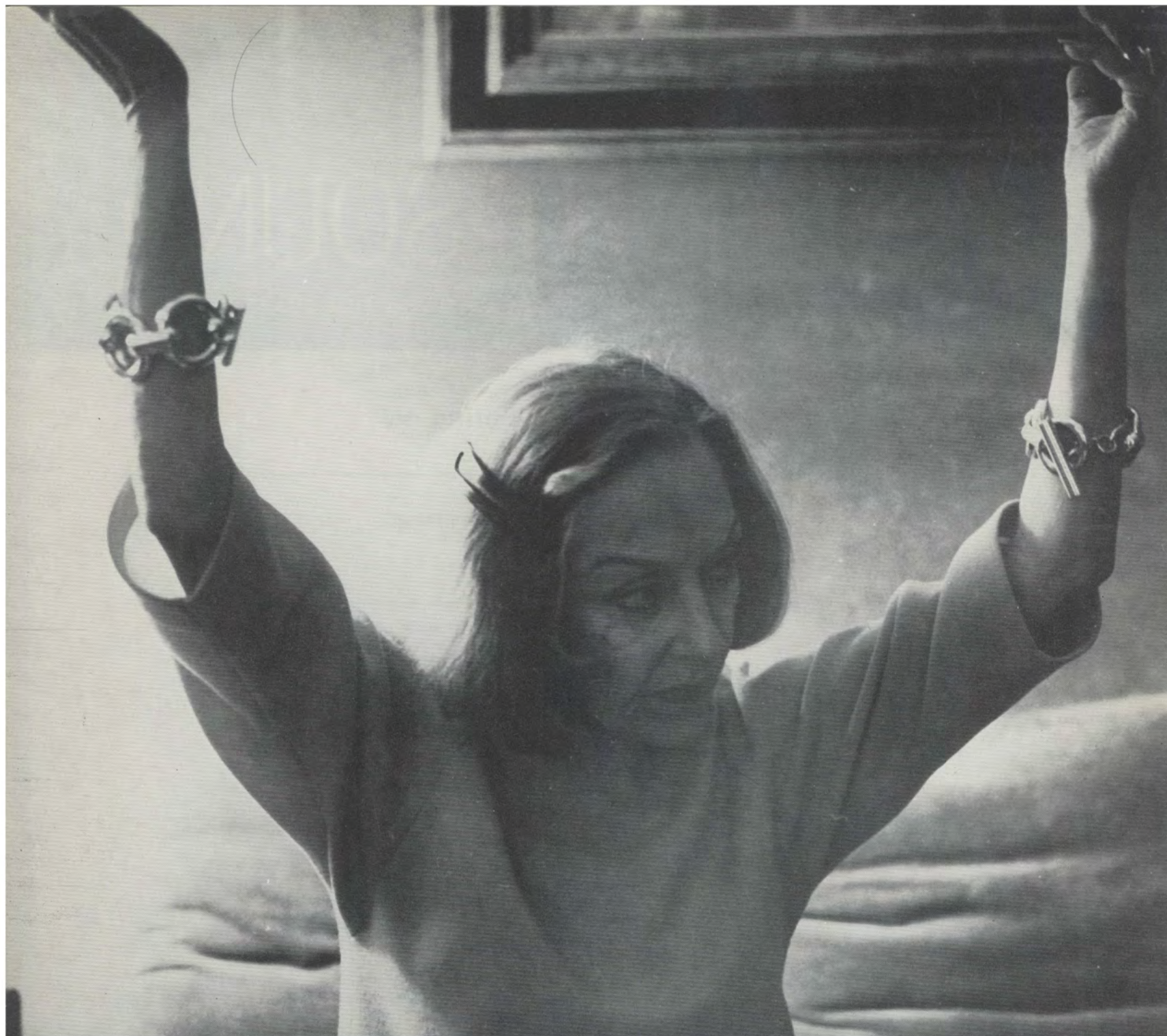
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*'I am not
going to
write my
memoirs,'*

GLORIA SWANSON TALKS TO RUI NOGUEIRA AND IS PHOTOGRAPHED BY NICOLETTA ZALAFFI

ACTING IS A very strange word. I guess everyone is acting all of their lives—lawyers, doctors, people who don't even realise that they're acting. 'All the world's a stage' and everybody is acting in it. So, what is acting? I've thought about it a great deal. Some people go through a career just playing themselves. Like Tallulah Bankhead was always Tallulah Bankhead, no matter what she played, with the exception of one performance: in *The Little Foxes*. There she wasn't Tallulah, she was the character. I would say that Cary Grant is always Cary Grant. He's very charming, but whether he's playing a cowboy or playing a diplomat, he's always Cary Grant.

That's one type of acting, where the personality overpowers the character you're playing. And then there's the other kind, my kind, where apparently I have no personality of my own. The proof of which is that you cannot impersonate me. You can impersonate Norma Desmond—the character that I play in a picture—or maybe my idea of Sadie Thompson, but you cannot impersonate Gloria Swanson. None of the impersonators ever even tried to. I was once told by my French husband, de la Falaise, that I was a comedienne, and that if I went to Mexico and was told I was an earthen floor, I'd be the earthen floor. I took on the personality of my surroundings and the people I was with. I doubt if this is a compliment: it could be an awful insult. But nevertheless, there it is.

And when I think about doing a character, I find that I see in my mind's eye a person I'm reading about in a script. I give that person like a painter . . . or like a sculptor, who before even making one cut with his knife can see what he wants in a piece of stone. So I'm a canvas: it's in the mind's eye, and then you transfer it to the canvas with certain tools. When I'm creating a character, it's quite possible that I will steal from life. In one particular instance [*The Coast of Folly*, 1925] I was playing two parts—a mother and her daughter. The daughter was a very athletic type, and the mother was a foolish woman who didn't want her own husband to know that she had a grown child. She was trying to be young. So I copied her clothes from Fannie Ward, a famous woman in those days who'd had plastic surgery, had jewellery and chiffon to cover her neck, and things like this. Then I took the walk of Elinor Glyn, who was quite blind but too vain to wear glasses, so she was a little uneasy on her feet. I took some mannerisms from an actress who played in *Shanghai Gesture*, Florence Reed, plus a few other things I gathered to give me an idea of how this woman would be. Because she was mentally foolish.

And out of that came a character so strange to me that when the picture was played it didn't make very much money, because nobody knew I was that woman. In those days they used to go to see the people they loved; so they'd go in to see me, and they'd see me briefly as the young girl, but who the other woman was they didn't know, because if they didn't come in at the beginning and didn't see the titles, they wouldn't realise that she carried most of the picture. So although I felt that was a good performance and an interesting picture, it wasn't what you would call a howling financial success.

* * *

I was once playing the spy in Shaw's *Man of Destiny*, and on the same evening did J. M. Barrie's *The Old Lady Shows Her Medals*, which made a complete contrast. I made myself very tall with headdresses and things, and then in the next play I was very small . . . I was like Lon Chaney, I guess. My daughter, who was sitting in the first row, became hysterical having just seen me in the Shaw play, and then seeing five women in the Barrie and being unable to figure out which one was me. She thought I wasn't there. So she came backstage weeping and crying "Where's my mother, where's my mother?" They pointed out to her which one I was, and that was all right. But all through the performance you could hear the audience rustling their programmes—Where was I? Which one was I? To me this is another form of acting: my own personality, if I have one, is submerged, and the character is the important thing.

As for directors, there are different kinds too. There's the director who allows the actor to give his own interpretation of a part, and becomes a conductor of an orchestra, moving it

down or bringing it up. Then there's the other kind where the director is a thwarted actor, a ham as we call him, who wants to show the actor how to do it. So what you often get is a bad performance, with an actor trying to imitate someone who may not be giving a very good performance either. I had the experience of being on Charlie Chaplin's set for *The Countess from Hong Kong*. I consider Chaplin a great genius: that is permanent. And he has contributed techniques without which I don't know what would have happened to comedy. But I was on the *Countess from Hong Kong* set for maybe forty minutes or an hour, and I was shocked, because had I been one of the actors I would have been absolutely out of my mind. Here were Brando and Sophia Loren looking like children watching the choreographer. Because he would take two or three steps to the right and then turn . . . you know, he would show them. All a director has to do is say to the actor, "I think if you move to the right a few steps, and are sure you don't get out of the light or that the door doesn't cover you, then turn and say your lines. . . ." That's one thing, to relate it to dialogue. But to relate it to pantomime yourself makes the actor nothing more than a puppet—and not even a good one either. Both their faces looked unhappy, and I don't know how they stood it. Because how can they contribute their own interpretation to a character if they are constantly being told to make a gesture that may not be natural to their idea of the character? If they're not good enough, then get someone else, someone who might come closer to the director's idea.

Personally, I was lucky. I worked with Cecil De Mille, and De Mille was quite unlike a man called D. W. Griffith who had his career more or less at the same time. You could always tell when an actor had been working with Griffith because they all had the same gestures. All of them. They'd cower like mice when they were frightened, they'd shut not their fingers but their fists, they'd turn down their mouths . . . Lillian Gish, Dorothy Gish, all of them. Even the men had a stamp on them. If you didn't know who the director was and just saw the actors, you'd know it was a Griffith picture, or at least that they were Griffith players.

* * *

Now with De Mille . . . I remember once an actor said to him, "Mr. De Mille, would you tell me how you would like me to play this scene?" De Mille said, "No, I won't tell you how to play the scene. You've read the script. I hired you as an actor. Play it. If it's no good, I'll tell you." This actor thought he was flattering Mr. De Mille, instead of which he was going to be spanked. He would never allow anybody to tell me what to do. Once a scriptwriter was about to come on the set to tell me what she thought I ought to do. Mr. De Mille shoved her off the set and said, "Don't talk to my fellow. Leave her alone, she's all right."

And I would familiarise myself with the set, because if it was my home I wanted to feel at home in it. So I would do certain things, and then he would say, "I think we'll use that piece of business." Sometimes I couldn't remember what I'd done, and then he would remind me. I made six or seven consecutive pictures with him. I was the only player who worked with him that long—most others only did one or two pictures. This gave me confidence because he was a great man. He was a very strong man. I had had experience of giving my own interpretation prior to this when I was with Jack Conway, who did a couple of pictures of mine at Triangle. Still, at the same time I learned a great deal from Mr. De Mille in many ways. And because I had an insatiable curiosity about the whole business of making pictures, not just acting . . . he enjoyed this too, he liked me wanting to know why we did this and why we did that. I liked to go into the cutting room to find out how they did it, and so on. Most actors don't have that curiosity. They do their job, they're on the set, and they can't wait to get home. I wasn't that way. And I worked in a different era, when there were no unions. If you wanted to stay on working you could. You had the privilege of going on working to finish a scene.

Then I made about ten films with Sam Wood during the first years of my Paramount contract. The first one came after *The Affairs of Anatol*, when I had just had my baby. I didn't

want to be a star, I wanted to stay with Mr. De Mille. Everybody thought I was out of my mind. But De Mille told me I had to leave him, I had to go and be a star on my own because, he said, "You're a star and I'm a star, and we can't put all our eggs in one basket." I said, "But Mr. De Mille, if I leave you I won't have good sets, and I won't have good stories, and I won't have this and I won't have that, and I know what's going to happen, they'll pay me so much money and they'll economise on something else. . . ." He said, "No, young fellow, it will be all right. You go ahead." So my first picture with Sam Wood was an Elinor Glyn story called *The Great Moment*.

* * *

At the beginning I was never with Essanay, only Keystone. When I was with Sennett, I only did light comedies: I did not do slapstick comedies with the bathing girls and the Keystone Cops. But as you say, essentially I've worked with only a few directors. I've done one picture with Billy Wilder; I did one third of a picture with von Stroheim. Outside of them, the directors I've worked with were not very well known. I always wanted to work with Lubitsch—well, who didn't? Everybody wanted to work with Lubitsch. That was an unfortunate thing, because I did not. . . . Naturally there have been other directors since then I would have liked to work with. The young directors now seem to me to be doing exceedingly well, because ever since *Tom Jones* a new kind of technique seems to have come into the business of making pictures. I think everybody should see that picture at least four times, especially technicians. I saw it four times, and I was amazed at all the new things that were brought to that picture. And Lelouch. . . . You don't like Lelouch, I gather? Well, everyone has his own opinion, and everyone is allowed to speak. I happen to like the method of shooting in a real place and the camerawork. Sometimes camerawork can get to be more important than the acting or the scene; and I think in some instances this happens now, especially with new directors. But I think that pictures today are quite exciting in the way they are made.

Society for Sale? Yes, we made that for Triangle before Frank Borzage was well known and before I was well known. I didn't realise I'd done a picture with him . . . he made some wonderful pictures, a very sensitive director. With McCarey I made a film called *Indiscreet*. Leo McCarey was a little more of the actor-director kind. He would sort of laugh at his own jokes . . . you know. I don't think the picture was particularly good. It was written by DeSylva, Brown and Henderson and had a lot of music in it and a lot of songs, and that's probably why I was in it.

Raoul Walsh was a great director, full of vitality. He and I wrote the screen version of *Sadie Thompson*. We now can't find the last reel of the film. Isn't that a crime? This was when I was producing, and I made him play the lead in it. He didn't want to, he was very shy. But the character, O'Hara, should be shy, kind of bashful, and he was absolutely perfect for it. After that they remade it twice . . . oh! The Crawford version was by Milestone, who was very arty and decided he was going to do tricks with the camera . . . and it was Crawford's 'Lady' period or something. And Huston, who's not a bad actor, was awful in it too. But ours had Lionel Barrymore. You can imagine him with that kind of fanatic look . . . he was perfect as Mr. Davidson.

Allan Dwan and I made many pictures together. He was wonderful. You know, we wrote the stories together on the set. Those were the days when you didn't take a scene completely literally: if you wanted to change something you just changed it. When you saw *Manhandled*, was the impersonation of Chaplin in it? I did it again in *Sunset Boulevard*, but it was better when I first did it in *Manhandled* because my face was rounder. I was too thin to look like him when I was in *Sunset Boulevard*. I have a photograph of myself that looks exactly like Chaplin. It looked so . . . little hands, round face, everything exactly like him. I showed it to Chaplin, and he said, "I wonder who that is I'm with?" And it was Allan Dwan. It was he who made the picture where I played two parts—the mother and daughter.

Oh! *Madame Sans-Gêne*. We CANNOT find it! That was

directed by Léonce Perret, and it was a gem. But it was not appreciated by the Paramount people in America at all. Do you know that if Paris had been bombed during the last war, this film would have been an invaluable record? We shot in Fontainebleau, Malmaison, Compiègne, not just the gardens, inside. It was an absolute record of those rooms, and it's a crime that it is lost. I can't believe that the French don't have a copy of it, because in those days we used to make 340–350 prints of each negative and a certain number were sent abroad. Now you know that when a picture finished its run, the prints were supposed to be returned to the exchange or destroyed. But nobody destroyed them. They hadn't the heart. Projectionists and people like that took them and put them in their garages. I can't believe, and I never will believe, that there isn't somewhere in the world a copy of *Madame Sans-Gêne*. Forget I'm in it, that has nothing to do with it. I'm talking about the fact that it was a documentation. The Cinémathèque Française claim they don't have a print, but I don't BELIEVE them! Is Henri Langlois an old man? Is he older than I am? Because if he is, I'll outlive him and I'll see it yet. I would go down on my KNEES to this man. . . . Just let me look at it, I'd say, I'll keep your secret. . . .

Because of all the pictures that I have made, *Madame Sans-Gêne* . . . I was the first American producer-actress to make a picture abroad, and I was all of twenty-four years old. I was just . . . you know . . . it was so exciting. And it was a good picture. Let's put it this way: many times they buy up a property but they change it and only use the title. This was not changed. It was Sardou's play put in picture form. And this experience was something I'll always think of very fondly as one of the exciting pictures I made. I came over to France, and the only Americans I brought with me were the writer and the cameraman. One English actor, Warwick Ward, who had to be English anyway. The rest were all French. We shot every scene at Fontainebleau, inside, apart from the laundry scene and a couple of street scenes with guns, which were done in a little studio that still exists . . . I can't remember the name. The Marshals of France were picked for the way they looked from paintings; we played chess with a set that some Chinese emperor had given Napoleon. And then Napoleon's library: there was a vendetta between the architect, who didn't want us to come in, and the curator (I'm sure he thought he was the reincarnation of Napoleon), who did. And we would no sooner get permission from the Ministers of the Exterior and Interior, than bang! would go the Government. In three weeks the Government changed five times.

Each time we had to go to another Minister of the Interior and another Minister of the Exterior, and every day we were all sitting waiting in our costumes for word that we could go in. So Fontainebleau was a mass of people in costume. If anyone had come in a helicopter and looked down, he would have thought "My God! I've gone back in history." It took us three weeks or more finally to get permission to go in. It was a fantastic thing. The first day, we were to shoot a scene where I come out of Fontainebleau in a black and white striped dress with a black and white striped parasol (René Hubert, who did the costumes, is still alive, he's a wonderful man). And standing there were all the Marshals of France. The one in the centre had a big bouquet of red roses. He made a speech, came up the stairs, and handed me his flowers. I just stood there and cried. Then the picture started, and from then on it was an absolute joy. When something goes well, it has a happy flavour to it.

* * *

Today you always hear so much about stars walking off the set, fights, directors leaving, new directors. I don't know. I never heard of this. I never walked off a set in my life. *Queen Kelly*? Well, that was my own production. I was boss, it was my money; besides, we had censorship then and the picture was going to be in the wastepaper basket. No, that's something else. Once, too, with Zukor . . . Paramount had promised me a letter which they hadn't given me, and when Zukor came on the set I said to him, "Mr. Zukor, for four days, each day, I have been promised a letter. Now must I threaten you and tell you I won't be here tomorrow morning unless I get it?"



So I got the letter and that was that. I didn't walk off the set. I just wasn't going to come in unless they gave me what they had promised. It was a matter of keeping their word. But today . . . you find that their hairdressers are flown in from I don't know where . . . as if it made any difference—they all look like they're ragamuffins in the head anyway. Someone else is flown in from somewhere else, and thousands of dollars are lost with extras standing by all over the place. I never did this, even when I was producing. Many times I went on the set without breakfast to be on time.

What happened on *Queen Kelly* was that the first third of the picture was to be in the little kingdom, and then we go to Africa. There was a little bit shot of the African scenes, and then I stopped the picture. So two years later, after making *The Trespasser* and *Indiscreet* and a few other pictures, I had this film which had cost me \$800,000 . . . we had 20,000 feet just of the business in the kingdom. So what am I going to do? Just let it sit there on the shelf? It was a story in itself; you didn't have to go to Africa. To get some revenue back, I put some music on it and I cut it. Well, I couldn't very well have it finish with her just jumping into the river. I had to wind it up in some way, so I had the shot of me lying dead on the bier and the young man coming to see me, thinking he was coming to take me away. I had to shoot that scene, which I did at my house. Because this was a couple of years afterwards and I didn't even know where von Stroheim was. I didn't see him again from the moment I said "Excuse me, I'm going to my bungalow." That's when I called New York and was told it was going to be censored.

Yes, I agree the African scenes almost seem to belong to another picture. That's partly why I stopped it, because to me it was another story. It would have been all right, maybe, if he had shot enough to cut it. You see, his problem was that he shot so much footage of everything. Sometimes you had not only thousands and thousands of feet, but five hours of a working day, so that it could cost \$2,000 just to get a close-up of an ashtray. I mean, come on! Everything with Stroheim was detail. You know, while we were making *Sunset Boulevard*, he went to Billy Wilder and said, "Look, you bring me all the way from Europe to say 'Yes, madam' and 'No, madam'. Why don't you have me fixing her shoes and washing out her little bras?" Every morning he would come with sheets and sheets of paper, and Billy Wilder would say, "We haven't time. We're telling a story. And we've got to get on with the story, not detail." But that was not von Stroheim's greatness. His pictures got inside people so much that you could almost smell them. That's fine if you can sit in a theatre for five hours and look at it; but when you have to cut it down, and the money has gone. . . . This was always his problem. I was told he wouldn't do it on *Queen Kelly*, that two men would watch him and see he didn't. Well, we had 20,000 feet of film for one third of the picture. So we would have had 60,000 feet to cut down to 10,000. Now, how do you do this? And it would have ended up as a \$2 million picture when we had \$700,000 or \$800,000 in the budget.

I didn't see Stroheim until years later when he was in *Arsenic and Old Lace*. Years had passed . . . I don't know how many years . . . and I went backstage and said hello to him. The next time I saw him was on the set of *Sunset Boulevard*. And he was still von Stroheim. Still.

* * *

When we started *Sunset Boulevard* we had only twenty-six pages of script. Brackett and Wilder were determined I should do it. I didn't want to. Because in the original script they showed me there were things they wanted me to say about people who were still living—true things—and I said, no, I would generalise but I would not be so cruel, that it was unnecessary. Billy Wilder said, "Just do it for the test," so I did. They had me talking about people who were still around, and there didn't seem any point. I could generalise, say things like "Look at them in the front office, the master minds. They took the idols and smashed them." But to talk specifically about this person and that . . . it didn't seem right. They pointed out that I would be Norma Desmond, not myself. But I said, look, even if I put a sign on me this big, a lot of

people are going to say—a lot of people *have* said—that this was my biography. Which is silly. First of all, I *did* make some talking pictures, and if people don't remember them that's unfortunate because I thought they were good pictures. And secondly I do not live in the past, I have no longing to recapture any of it, I am much more a woman of the present and the future and of dreams of tomorrow. I am not a recluse, I certainly haven't shot anybody, and they're not floating face down in my bathtub. When you remind people of this, then they realise how silly it is of them to say this. . . . It was true that I hadn't made a picture in a long time. And the only other thing in the film that had any reality to my career was that Mr. De Mille used to call me 'Young fellow' and I always called him 'Mr. De Mille'.

I must tell you that *Sunset Boulevard* was a very easy picture to do, because it had a something about it from the moment it started. It had a spark, and that spark never went out. We were twelve weeks on that picture, and each day was a day of joy for me. Each day that I came to work I was singing all the way to the studio, singing like the birds. On the last scene of the picture, when I come down the stairs, I cried. . . . I wished I could start it all over again, because these had been twelve of the happiest weeks I'd known. Something very curious: my mother, who was never very close to my career, was living with me at the time, and three or four days after it was over, she said to me, "You know, Gloria, I feel as if somebody had left this apartment." And that person was Desmond. I am not an actor who carries the personality I'm doing with me. Usually when I take the clothes and the make-up off, it stays in the clothes. Just as if a murder happened in this room, it would be in the walls. However, at home, at night, since Norma had another voice, my mother would sometimes cue me, and that probably brought her into focus, this other character. I don't know enough about the medical term schizophrenia, but I do know that you can have two characters and go from one to the other. And it would seem to me that you consciously create an illusion which becomes almost . . . not a solid thing, but it is certainly there.

I remember once when my daughter was a little girl, I was doing *The Old Lady Shows Her Medals*. There was a scene in which the young Scotsman whom she wants to be her son puts the old lady in a chair, takes his muffler and folds it round her neck, and looks at her; and she knows that outside a man is coming to take him away and she will never see him again. She hears this whistle wheeeeeee! offstage. And whenever I heard that whistle, I would get a brrrrrr! up my spine and the tears would come. I would cry, he would take me in his arms, and then I would go off one way and he would go to the door and call, and the curtain would come down. Well, offstage I had my maid with Kleenex, because I had to go back and take a curtain call. But one day my daughter was there because it was Christmas time—I told you she'd come and wonder which one I was—and she said to me, "Mother, how can you cry like that every performance in exactly the same spot?" Without thinking, I said, "I don't cry. The old lady cries." And that was absolutely true, because you find yourself on stage as if you were walking behind the other character. I don't know how to explain this. You see *her*, not yourself. You see the character doing something and you think . . . you know . . . you don't like it, or yes, that was good. You're like a maestro, like a puppet-master pulling strings.

I don't know how other actors feel about this, but once I was asked to play myself on a television show. It was *The Beverly Hillbillies*, and I was to play Gloria Swanson. I said sure, all right. But do you know, when I got on the set I thought . . . how do I walk? . . . how do I talk? I don't know. I hadn't the slightest conception of what Gloria Swanson was like! It was the hardest thing I ever did because I found myself being very self-conscious. "Is *that* the way I would do it? How silly!" It's very strange.

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Nero's Weekend? That's a very funny story, and a sad story. I got involved in this because of only one thing: De Sica. I would have done anything to work with De Sica. I also

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'AH! JE L'AI TROP AIME POUR NE LE POINT HAIR' L'amour fou

ONE EVENING LATE IN 1950, at a ciné-club in the Rue Danton in Paris, I happened to attend one of those purgatorial programmes of 16 mm. experimental shorts which are sent to try the cinéaste. One film, however, had something: a certain hypnotic, obsessional quality as, for some forty minutes, it attempted to show what happens when nothing happens by observing, in strict objectivity, behaviour in a dentist's waiting-room. No plot, no dialogue; simply the play of silence, covert glances, magazines nervously skimmed, cigarettes furtively lit, as strangers casually thrown together try to come to terms with each other with nothing to come to terms about.* Called *Quadrille*, the film achieved a minor *succès de scandale* when the half of the audience still present at the end almost came to blows in passionate disagreement. It wasn't until years later that light dawned as to the name of the director and leading actor: respectively, Jacques Rivette and Jean-Luc Godard.

* If memory fails me on the film, which seems to have disappeared unchronicled, may Jacques Rivette forgive me.

Eighteen years on, Rivette is still keeping up his reputation as the director people love to hate. With *Paris Nous Appartient*, it was critics angrily crying hoax; with *La Religieuse*, it was Church, State and Madame de Gaulle crying scandal; with *L'Amour Fou*, it was distributors and exhibitors crying that the film offended commercial norms. More importantly and remarkably, Rivette has throughout remained unshakably faithful to his obsession with obsession, analysing and exploring themes which receive their completest, most shattering treatment in *L'Amour Fou*, a film which confronts the magnificent obsession of life itself: a time to love and time to die.

Enough has been written already about the background row and the various shortened versions proposed and prepared against Rivette's will (at time of writing, the integral version is doing excellent business in Paris, and the commercially shortened one has sunk without trace). Instead, some plot and a few facts to serve as a platform for this extremely straightforward yet extraordinarily complex film.

L'Amour Fou is about Sébastien (Jean-Pierre Kalfon), a young actor-producer who is rehearsing a stage production of Racine's *Andromaque*. Meanwhile, television cameras watch



his every move and spy on the actors for a TV film about a play in rehearsal, and his wife Claire (Bulle Ogier), protesting that she cannot concentrate in these conditions, walks out on her leading role as Hermione and is replaced by Sébastien's ex-mistress, Marta. As Sébastien becomes more and more absorbed in the production, Claire sits at home, nursing feelings of exclusion and jealousy. And gradually the couple are sucked into a terrifying emotional vortex in which, tossed helplessly about and fringing murder, madness and suicide, they cling despairingly to moments of love, hate, passion and complicity in an effort to save themselves from being engulfed in the final, inevitable separation.

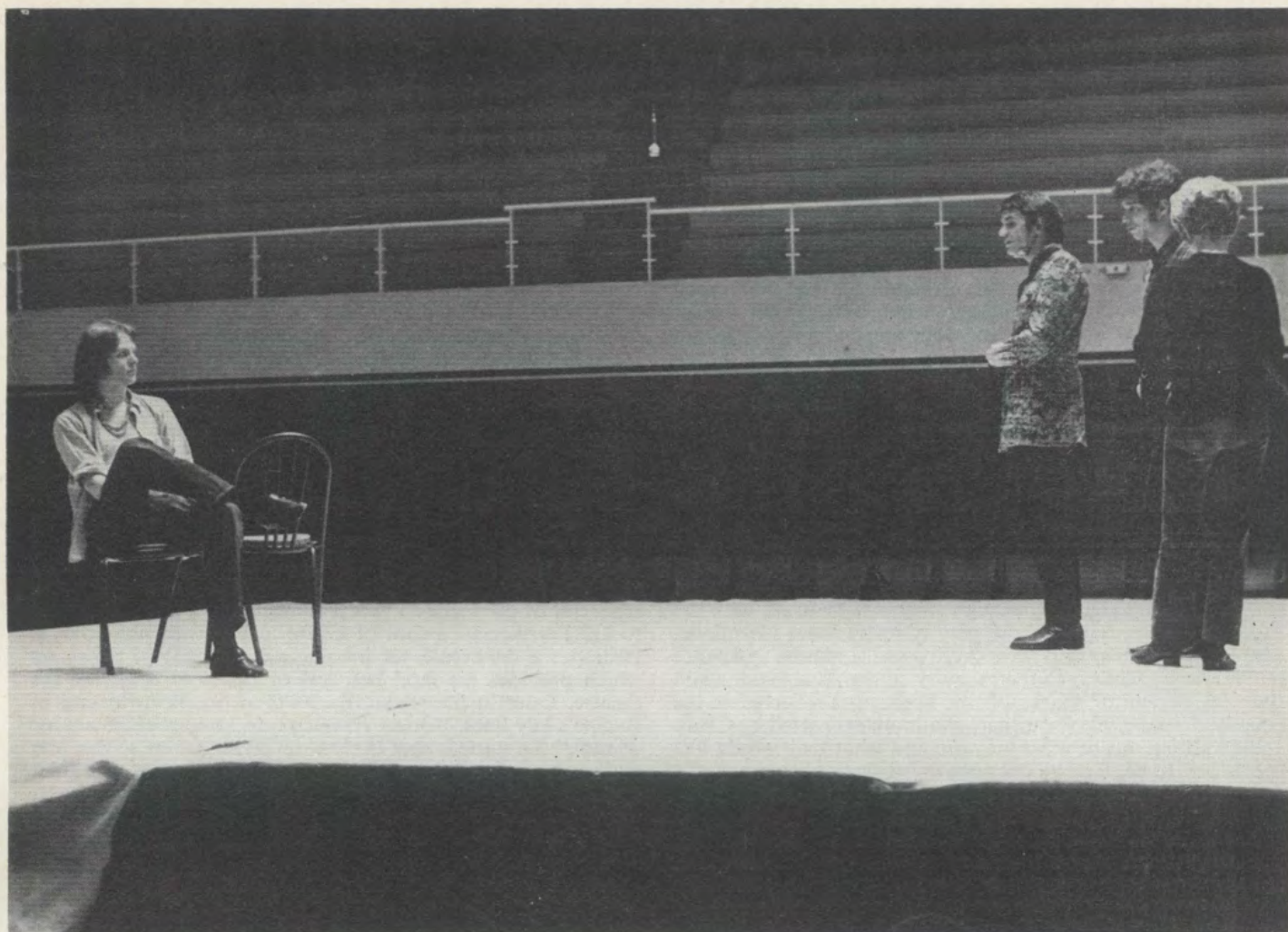
* * *

Fact one: the film runs for four hours and twelve minutes, excluding interval, which means that in sheer physical weight, the sense of having lived these experiences with Claire and Sébastien is extraordinary: the abnormal and unhurried running time means that instead of following the usual simple curve of dramatised human relationships, Rivette can make false starts, double back, repeat, explore cul-de-sacs, giving their affair the density and irrationality of life itself.

Fact two: all the theatre scenes were shot on 16 mm., then blown up and intercut with the 35 mm. domestic sequences. The resulting interplay underlines, with superb economy and precision, the insoluble conflict between two worlds: not only texturally, with the slightly muzzy 16 mm. lending the theatre a mysterious, haunting quality as though it were a siren luring Sébastien away from the harsh, brightly lit reality of his home, but also stylistically, with the mobile 16 mm. camera reflecting the flexibility of the rehearsals, while the stolid Mitchell (almost as immobile as the camera in *La Religieuse*) impassively watches Claire and Sébastien thresh about in the grip of their inflexible decline. Paradoxically, too, and adding another layer to the film, the theatre seems to withdraw into itself under the 16 mm. camera's inquisitive eye, while its place in public domain is taken by the private emotional life which creeps like a mole to the surface, uninhibited by the indifferent Mitchell.

Fact three: while the film was being shot, Jean-Pierre Kalfon really did rehearse a production of *Andromaque*, which was ultimately to have been filmed in its entirety (it wasn't: there was not enough stock); meanwhile, the television unit genuinely watched, filmed and interviewed for their TV reportage. Hence the almost painfully accurate atmosphere of the theatre sequences: the light-hearted beginnings, the gradual absorption, the irritation with interloping interviewers, the onset of all-pervading fatigue as the rehearsals go on and on. Admirable in itself as a documentary reportage on the theatre, this accuracy is indispensable as a springboard for the other half of the film. As in *Paris Nous Appartient*, the theatre is a mysterious unknown which swallows up its devotees, excluding those who remain outside, so that they—Claire, Anne Goupil in *Paris Nous Appartient*—compensate by weaving their own hallucinations. Faced by the withdrawal of Sébastien, Claire responds with fantasies of jealousy and betrayal which, though unfounded, have yet a tangible object in the theatre.

Fact four: the film was shot without script or detailed scenario, having been argued, elaborated, evolved and lived, as shooting progressed, on the agreed basis of the rehearsals for the play, the TV reportage, and an ultimate goal in the Claire-Sébastien break-up. Broadly speaking, therefore, the film was shot in sequence (it has, of course, undergone some structural rearrangement in the editing), and this is one of its trump cards. The last quarter of the film is devoted almost exclusively to the carnivorous battle between Claire and Sébastien, locked inside their flat, as they embark on a veritable orgy of passion, which can be called neither love nor hate and which culminates in the gleeful, hysterical destruction of the apartment. As they lie on the floor amid the ruins, all rage and passion spent, Sébastien remarks on her sadness. "Je suis fatiguée," she replies, "Je ne veux plus jouer. Je ne veux plus te voir." It is the end; and the sense of complete physical exhaustion, of two people who have come to the end of themselves and each other, is terrifyingly, tangibly real. It is, I suppose, *cinéma-vérité*; but *cinéma-vérité* for once organised, controlled and chiselled into shape.



As its title suggests, *L'Amour Fou* is a film conceived under the distantly benevolent eye of André Breton, arch-priest of the surrealist view of love as an erotic exaltation beyond and above human control. Even Buñuel could not have bettered Rivette's imagery in this cruel see-saw between love and hatred where, oddly, it is Sébastien rather than Claire who becomes the victim and assumes (Hitchcockian transference?) her madness: Sébastien waking in the night, to become silently aware that she is holding a hat-pin poised over his eye; working at his desk while outside, her fingers scratching and scrabbling at the door work themselves into a frenzied, beating tattoo (more than one echo here of the drums of *L'Age d'Or*); patiently cutting up her food for her, tasting it to prove it isn't poisoned; ripping the clothes he wears to shreds with a razor-blade in a sudden frenzy of grief; and, in a final act of defiance and despairing affirmation, waving their passion like a banner from the balcony of their apartment, high above the world dwarfed and forgotten far below.

But this crescendo of delirium only works because Rivette has built it, slowly and painstakingly, on a structure as solid, compact and rich in resonance as a Racine tragedy. To begin with, there are the analogies with *Andromaque* itself, with the tormented quadrangle of the play (Orestes loves Hermione, who loves Pyrrhus, who loves Andromache, whose insistence on remaining faithful to the memory of the dead Hector and spurning her suitor sparks off the holocaust) reflected in the equally vicious circle (or rather, quadrangle) created by Claire and Sébastien out of what they are and what they would like themselves to be. Rivette does not draw, or need to draw, any direct or obvious parallels; instead he creates what might be called a structural undertow of cross-references.

For instance, the film opens and closes on the same image: the blank white canvas square of the empty rehearsal stage. On the soundtrack one hears a ragged mutter of voices as the actors prepare to come on stage, suddenly cut across by the sound of a child crying. The effect, Rivette has said, was fortuitous, but it is there, both opening and closing the film; and if one wishes to be grandiose about it, one might say that here we have the theatre of life, in which we are to witness the tragedy of birth, love and death. More to the point, however, is the fleeting echo here of Astyanax, Andromache's child, unseen and unheard but the real, off-stage catalyst of the tragedy. Only when bolstered by this discreet signpost to the child Claire and Sébastien do not have, do two curious little scenes fall into place: one where Claire, on a sudden whim (Sébastien has bought a record with a picture of a dog on the sleeve because its sad eyes remind him of her), dashes off on a fruitless attempt to buy a basset-hound puppy; and the complementary one where Sébastien brings her a substitute kitten, to which she takes an instant dislike. Later, the incident is further extended and woven into the theme of betrayal during a rehearsal at the flat when Marta (the actress who replaced Claire as Hermione) playfully taunts the kitten with the record sleeve, making barking noises: Claire starts as though she had been slapped.

Similarly, the long rehearsal sequences which are interspersed throughout the film have a practical function over and above their revelation of the mysterious private world to which Sébastien escapes. Again it is a structural one, demonstrating that all the scenes between Claire and Sébastien are simply rehearsals for the dénouement of their personal tragedy which, once she has opened a rift between them by opting out as stubbornly as Andromache, is as inevitable and inescapable as that of *Andromaque*. Just as the actors stutter and stumble, go back to the beginning and try again to master a line or the sense of a passage, so Claire and Sébastien spend the film feverishly at work, reading and re-reading, trying to find the rhythms and meanings of their own tangled emotions.

And in one of the most striking—albeit elliptical and shadowy—motifs of the film, Rivette seems to suggest that they find this meaning not in themselves but in art. For at the end, after Claire has gone, we see Sébastien squatting on the floor of the ruined, desolate flat, listening to her voice on tape, remote, fragmentary, hesitant: "on est comme des poissons qui passent l'un après l'autre . . . contact d'un pied,

d'une cuisse . . . j'ai peur pour toi . . ." Claire's despairing need to understand, and make him understand, led her to try to tape the thoughts that assailed her, but ultimately all she could seize were the meaningless sounds of hysteria—the beating of her heart, the roar of passing traffic, a cacophonous crackle from the radio. Earlier, however, she found clarity in recording Hermione's speech from *Andromaque* when she realises she still loves Pyrrhus, after having planned his death:

"Où suis-je? Qu'ai-je fait? Que dois-je faire encore?
Quel transport me saisit? Quel chagrin me dévore?
Errante, et sans dessein, je cours dans ce palais.
Ah! ne puis-je savoir si j'aime ou si je hais?
Le cruel . . ."

Sébastien, one imagines, may listen and at last understand, as Pyrrhus might have understood had he not been blinded by his own uncontrollable passion.

Throughout, as André Labarthe remarks, apologising in his role as the TV director for the disrupting presence of his camera crew, "life and theatre get a bit mixed up"; and Rivette's superb editing makes the most of this interaction by seeking correspondences. A direct cut, for instance, from a rehearsal of the scene in which Hermione commands Orestes to kill Pyrrhus, to a shot of Claire in bed with her ex-lover Philippe: a deliberate yet involuntary betrayal of Sébastien which preludes his fatal betrayal of her with a girl at the theatre. Later in the rehearsals, as they wrestle with one of Racine's key lines, "Quels ruisseaux de sang coulent autour de moi," the scene is shot in close-up on Sébastien, so that one realises he is thinking of Claire, talking to her, rather than explaining the line to his actors. Most tellingly of all, perhaps, a direct cut from Sébastien abruptly telephoning to arrange a rehearsal after Claire has finally decided to leave, to the rehearsal of Hermione's reported death.

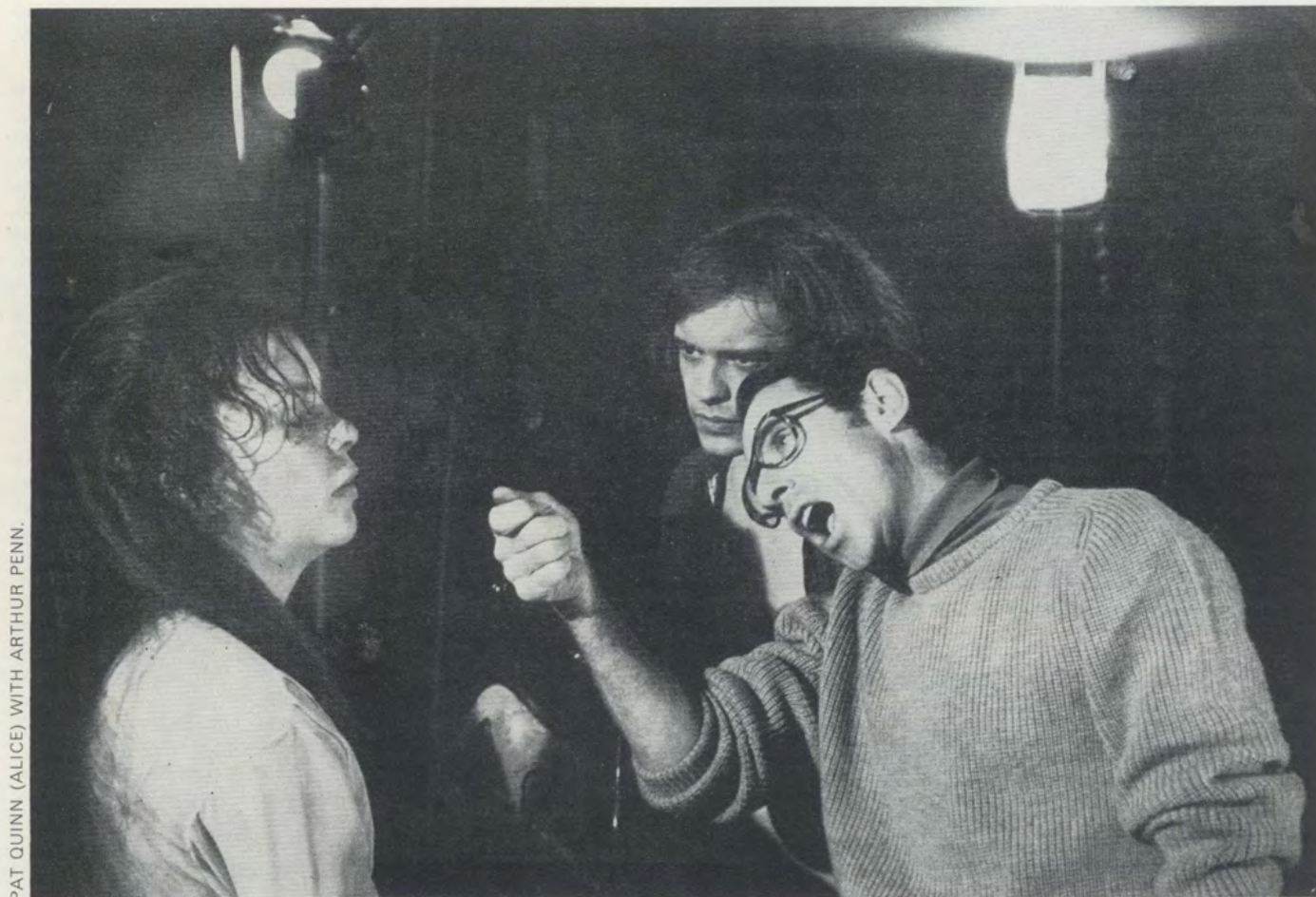
With his foundations so solidly established, Rivette has all the time in the world to sit back and harvest those tiny, unexpected moments of revelation which only *cinéma-vérité* techniques can seize on the wing and which *cinéma-vérité* almost invariably squanders by failing to provide a context. There is, for instance, an extraordinarily accurate and touching scene in a café in which Claire talks to a girl-friend, half pouring out her fears, half holding them back, and punctuating her remarks with hesitant, apologetic grins which exactly convey her confusion. Beautifully played by Bulle Ogier (both she and Kalfon are remarkable), but obviously unrehearsed and unpremeditated, the sequence is given the creative edge of formality it needs by a slight, precisely calculated movement of the camera which means that for part of this not-quite-confidential exchange of confidences, there is an eavesdropper: Claire herself, reflected in a wall mirror.

Equally striking because so unexpected, a scene where Claire is prowling restlessly round the flat one night when Sébastien awakens and asks what she is looking for. Instantly she pounces, accusing him of wanting to leave her, of wanting a divorce. When Sébastien wearily turns over to go back to sleep, she shakes his shoulder, crying "I have to know . . . you must tell me." Hitherto, even when she spied on him or threatened to kill him, Sébastien has treated her with the utmost gentleness and understanding. Now he suddenly slaps her viciously, pulls the sheet over his head, and goes back to sleep. Whether he does so because his defences are down in sleep, because he has at last had enough, or because he is on the verge of taking over her obsession, never becomes clear: it is simply another in the film's labyrinth of twisting, turning blind alleys which permit only one débouchement.

Actually, despite the predominantly clear, open settings (the sunny, white-walled flat, the white canvas rehearsal square) the labyrinth image isn't at all a bad one. As Sébastien remarks, Racine's play is composed of a series of ante-chambers into which the characters come to confess and where one feels that "the walls are broken down". So too in the film, with its dark figures isolated against blank backgrounds, lost in a labyrinth of emptiness with no landmarks, no sheltering walls, no refuge, and as their only Ariadne's thread, the desperate, ostrich-like recourse to mad, uninhibited sex.

Alice's Restaurant

LILY VAN DEN BERGH



PAT QUINN (ALICE) WITH ARTHUR PENN.

THE SCENE IS SET as follows:

An office in City Hall where draftees come for their physical. On one side a door marked: Marriage Licenses; on the other side there are signs: Hunting Licenses, Dog Licenses.

On wooden benches a few boys in their late teens are sitting slouched, their legs sprawled wide, staring out into space, reading a book or just catching up on their sleep. Seated at a desk is a woman who calls them one by one: "Next"—she has trouble pronouncing the name—"Guthrie, Arlo." A boy with a long bashful face and long wavy hair topped by a big old-fashioned slouch hat gets into motion. The woman at the desk looks at him with obvious aversion. "Hat off," she snaps. The boy slowly removes his hat. She reads his registration form. "You filled in Scorpio where it says date of birth. I want the exact date."

Arlo says "Okay," and fills in the date.

"You wrote down the name of a nervous disorder. Do you suffer from that disorder, young man?"

"No, but it's an incurable disease that runs in the family. My father had it and my grandmother too."

"Yes, I see, but I certainly hope you realise that you are the one who has to go in the army and not your father or your grandmother."

"Of course I could get it."

The woman shrugs her shoulders.

"Anything else special?"

"No."

"Okay. You can leave. You'll be hearing from us. Next."

As the boy picks up his hat to leave, he softly but audibly says, "Peace."

I am on the set where Arthur Penn is working on his latest movie, *Alice's Restaurant*, in what used to be a factory in Pittsfield, a medium-sized town in Massachusetts, a five-hour drive from New York. Three months of uninterrupted movie-making are drawing to a close. The 40-man crew is tired; all that time in the local motel and watching the same movie every night is getting to be a strain, even for these professionals. Not that their work is any the worse for it. There is an enormous bustle of activity. Tens of assistants to the director, producer and cameraman dash back and forth and do their jobs with efficiency and speed, no more and no less: that's the way the union wants it. The cameraman has a long stick in his hand to give directions about the lighting. A make-up man brushes a curl in place, the script-girl looks at polaroid pictures to see if the setting checks with the last scene. The bell rings twice; silence in the studio; the soundtrack is on, the camera is rolling: Scene 1, Take 5 of *Alice's Restaurant*.

A funny title actually, because it's not about Alice and it has nothing to do with a restaurant; it's about boys who have to go in the army, about their way of life, their ideas about war (Vietnam, of course, that's their war). The title is the name of a song by the boy who plays the leading role: Arlo



ARLO GUTHRIE (CENTRE) IN "ALICE'S RESTAURANT". PHOTOGRAPH BY LILY VAN DEN BERGH.

Guthrie, 21, ballad singer, son of Woody Guthrie, the most famous folk singer America ever had. With his 'protest' songs in the Thirties he was the spokesman of what we now refer to as 'old left'; his songs became so famous nobody realises any more that they were his. Arlo is just starting out and the 19-minute song he wrote is his first hit. It's about an event in his life two years earlier.

He was living at the time with Alice and Ray Brock, a young married couple who had bought a vacated church in Stockbridge, a small town in Massachusetts. Anyone who wanted to could come there and sleep, eat, play their music and do whatever they felt like doing. Arlo and some other hippies, an old donkey, a German shepherd and a St. Bernard were all house guests. One day Arlo was supposed to take the garbage down to the city dump, but since it was Thanksgiving Day it was closed so he dumped the garbage somewhere else. The police found out about it, arrested him and locked him up for the night. He had to appear in court and was fined 50 dollars. That was that. A while later he had to report for a physical for the army. He "proceeded down the hall getting more injections, inspections, detections and all kind of stuff" until the most important question came up, "Kid, have you ever been arrested?" And because "I cannot tell a lie I proceeded to tell them the story of Alice's restaurant" and the subsequent arrest. He was then told to sit down on a bench: group W. "There were all kinds of mean, nasty, ugly-looking people on the bench... mother-rapers, father-stabbers, father-rapers..." Then it turns out he is rejected as unfit for military service. Arlo: "You wanna know if I'm moral enough to join the army, burn women, kids, houses and villages after being a litter bug?" The simple reply is: "Kid, we don't like your kind."

PENN: "Now that's not the truth. I mean, that's the story as Arlo tells it and that's the story as we are telling it in the film: it is an exaggeration, a kind of cartoon, based on true facts as all good cartoons are. We film it in a naturalistic way, but the way it will be edited will be somewhat like a cartoon. There are other aspects of the film which are very serious. It is not just confined to the draft and littering. It also has to do with his family, his way of life (nobody here

has presented the hippie sub-culture in a sensible, realistic way; they are either ridiculed or commercialised). It is about America itself, now that large numbers of young people are facing the draft into the army in a war which nobody agrees is a worthwhile war, if war is ever worthwhile, but certainly this is the most ridiculous war we have ever been connected with. We spend fortunes in money, in lives, destroying people, and we can't even point to the old bases that at least motivated war: that it is for the good, for democracy, that it is to liberate... This is for nothing, for nothing, except vanity, empty vanity, and that seems to me ridiculous."

Arthur Penn's voice isn't loud but it is penetrating. If someone tries to interrupt him he simply continues without raising his voice, determined to say what he has to say, until the interrupter gives up. He seems to be used to giving orders, not to taking them. When he talks he doesn't use gestures to emphasise his words. His saddish eyes, reddened by fatigue, look even sadder through the horn-rimmed glasses that seem to point downwards. Even when he laughs, it is not exuberant. There is irony in the corner of his mouth, which curls upwards when he's telling a story he likes. Although there is nothing soft about his features, there is something hesitant about his walk. He reminds you of the care-ridden European intellectuals just after World War II. This idea appears to be false once he starts talking.

"In this film there is criticism, but at the same time it is a spoof. Just like in *The Chase*, the movie I made before *Bonnie and Clyde*: the story had nothing to do with it, and nevertheless everyone thought it was about the murder of John F. Kennedy. The way those people shoot at each other in that film: it is not that they hate so much, it is more an extension of a kind of violence that they don't know where to deposit. They feel this kind of rage and impotence, and in a culture which uses weapons as freely as our culture does, there are very many unbalanced people who can, as we have seen all too painfully in the last few years, kill very fine men. I was television adviser to President Kennedy and then I worked with Robert Kennedy; I knew them just before they were killed. It was a very shocking experience."

In all the films Penn has made there is a lot of violence. "Penn has arguably given us the most complex and mature treatment of violence in the American cinema," writes Robin Wood in his book on Arthur Penn. "The presentation of violence differs from film to film. Yet one assumption remains consistent throughout: that violence in all its forms, from Helen's fury at being forced to hold a spoon in *The Miracle Worker*, through respectable society's vindictive hunting down of Bubba Reeves in *The Chase*, to Bonnie and Clyde's armed robbery, is an inevitable outlet for frustrated urges that can find no other. The escalation of violence into a catastrophic situation beyond anyone's control is a recurring motif in Penn, and felt with terrifying intensity..." Another feature of Penn's style is spontaneity. He has a strong feeling for physical sensation, which naturally leads to an attraction to the instinctive and spontaneous. All his characters just act, participate in life, without being able to stand back and judge.

This red theme of violence running through Penn's films is not entirely due to his own preferences: *Bonnie and Clyde* had already been offered to other directors before Penn undertook it, and *The Chase* was not entirely his free choice.

PENN: "After the shooting of *The Chase*, I did not finish the editing myself because I had to stay in New York and do a play. The producer Mr. Spiegel took the film to London to edit, so I could not participate. Maybe he wanted to edit it himself. I would have done it differently. There were differences in tone; editing is a very refined process in which your own viewpoint comes through in a more subtle way. *The Chase* was lacking in subtlety, it could have been a little less obvious.

"By the way, the American press didn't like that film very much. It was very badly received. They criticised the violence and they thought that some of the analogies to the shooting of John F. Kennedy were in bad taste and that it was too brutal. This was what they said about *Bonnie and Clyde* as

well, but that film was a big commercial success. In spite of its success, a lot of people didn't understand what it was all about. It was a social story about what was happening during the depression, but it was also about today in the sense that . . . people under pressure do absurd things and dangerous things, and the responsibility of a country is to be able to release that internal pressure so that it doesn't build up and cause a sort of national insanity, such as I think we find ourselves in today in this country."

Back to *Alice's Restaurant*: "I decided not to be bothering with the big studios again. I hate Hollywood and big stars; so now this is my own picture." Penn is very definite and proud about it. "I am in charge of the film, I get the money from United Artists, but they don't involve themselves at all. It does not happen often, but if you are successful, it does happen. Hillard Elkins is the producer." Elkins is a good friend of Penn's who worked with him on the Broadway musical *Golden Boy* with Sammy Davis Jr. in 1964. Penn asked Elkins to listen to Arlo Guthrie's song and asked him what he thought of it. Knowing Penn, Elkins said: "That could make a very good movie." That's how it started.

PENN: "In this movie I'm working with young people; half of the cast are amateurs, kids we picked up off the street. Young people are different. I think they are marvellous, they are original, they have courage. They are truly willing to resist the draft and go to gaol. And that's not such an easy decision when you're 18 or 19. The hippies do what they feel like doing and they'll be damned if they'll do anything else. In my youth it was very political and it was at the very edge of the war. Everything was very much concerned with life and death and survival; when we grew up, we knew we were going into the army to go and fight in the war. We wanted to go, my generation, we believed in that war; so we had no time for the other more important things in life."

Arlo Guthrie does have time for those things. What does he think about:

—*the movie*: "A good idea of Arthur's. I am not an actor and I don't want to act in any more movies but it's nice to see your friends again. We're just going through the whole thing again, only this time there happens to be a camera there."

—*his success as a folk singer*: "I learned to use my energy in another way for giving concerts, that's all."

—*his pop favourites*: "The Beatles, of course, Bob Dylan, Incredible String Band and Pentangle. The Rolling Stones are remembering the good things they used to do. But everyone forgets that the first one came from the States: Elvis."

—*the United States*: "In New York and around here they're pretty human, but on the west coast they're real Nazis. They have absolutely nothing to do out there. If I have to die, I'm gonna go out to California, that's where I want to die."

Penn isn't terribly enthusiastic about the self-criticism Americans are known for abroad and at home as well. That irritating European quality of being overly pleased with oneself, it seems to me, is noticeably missing here in America.

"It just looks that way. We really think we are great."

"You are sometimes; in science, in cultural things . . ."

"Not even in cultural things. We have the economics to make it possible to do very many things and if you do many things some of them are good, but that's because it's a very wealthy country. Broadway, for instance, is a place to make money. Not to do good work. The people who go to watch these productions: they are not a theatre audience. Actually, they are people who are going to look in a mirror, and that's why Broadway looks back at them and shows them a nice picture of themselves and they are happy; but they don't want to be upset or shaken or shocked."

"How do you think America can get out of the war," I finally asked him, "out of all the trouble they got into?"

"I think that the point has been reached where the American people on the whole have made it known to their leaders that they don't really want to be in this war. And now the only problem is how they get out of it without losing face. That's the most ridiculous thing, of course. The best way to get out of it, I think, would be to get out, simply walk out of it; that would be the most dignified and statesmanlike thing to do. But I am not a politician and the politicians keep worrying that the people will think they are weak leaders. I didn't think Khrushchev was a weak leader when he took the missiles out of Cuba. I thought that was one of the sanest decisions made in our time."

'SONG FOR AGEING CHILDREN' AT A HIPPIY FUNERAL. PHOTOGRAPH BY LILY VAN DEN BERGH.



John
Russell
Taylor

JOHN HUSTON and the figure in the carpet

"REFLECTIONS IN A GOLDEN EYE": HUSTON WITH ZORRO DAVID.



IT IS ALWAYS disastrous to start your career with a masterpiece. No one will ever let you live it down, or allow that you are living up to it. *The Maltese Falcon* is, undoubtedly, a masterpiece of a sort. But the sort is puzzling, unrepeatable—even if John Huston had ever wanted to repeat it. The film's special quality comes from its extreme tightness: everything follows unhesitatingly from what has gone before, there are no gaps, no pauses, no chance to dwell on atmosphere or character as something apart from the story. The characters are the story—or vice versa—and atmosphere is understood without independent development as quite simply the space which, for the duration of the picture, they happen

to inhabit. Everything is as pared down and self-defining as a Pinter play. And, since after all the film was adapted closely from a famous and very well-written book, by choosing to make the film in this way the director, almost by definition, excludes himself: he is, at most, an ironic angle of vision—rather as Bresson in *Mouchette* is a godlike, compassionate angle of vision.

Which is all very well, but where do you go from there? The answer, in Huston's case, is that you don't. Almost at once came the physical interruption of the war, and when that was done, a succession of new starts in new places, new attempts at self-definition which were constantly sabotaged, or at least misunderstood, by people

who, lining up the laconically efficient maker of *The Maltese Falcon* with the man Huston as he got into the papers and into some rather highly coloured novels, assumed that he must be trying to make tough, objective, fast-moving action dramas and then berated him because the finished films rarely turned out quite like that. Easy enough to say now, ah, but he wasn't trying to do anything of the sort. But it would surely have been almost impossible at the time, without some uncanny prescience at any rate, to read the signs in the films as they came and to see where their maker was tending. We can see it now only because we have in front of us the end product of Huston's slow self-definition, and by moving backwards we can see how it came about.

* * *

We must start, of course, with *Reflections in a Golden Eye*. In a way it is like starting at the beginning: one thing has not changed at all since *The Maltese Falcon*, and that is the angle of vision. The characters in Carson McCullers' novel could hardly be weirder, nor their world stranger, more airless and cut off from the everyday world as we know it. But Huston treats it all as though it were the most ordinary thing imaginable. His attitude towards the strange goings-on chronicled by the film is cool, level, interested but uninvolved. The people are observed not unsympathetically, but with an easy, almost casual acceptance of their absurd aspects. And since Huston clearly recognises the pitfalls, they are not, after all, absurd, and are funny only when he intends them to be. Above all, he avoids completely the Deep South hothouse atmosphere which is usually the principal concern of directors who undertake this sort of subject. And yet, the film is by no means unatmospheric, nor can one suppose that atmosphere of a sort was not an important interest of Huston's in making it. Why else would he spend so much time, trouble and even money on the curious 'washed' colour in which it was originally conceived, and be so bitter about Warner Brothers' failure to show the film in this form anywhere but during the first weeks of the first New York run?

Atmosphere of a sort, then, but of what sort? The answer to this question is perhaps the key to Huston's work. His approach to atmosphere, as to character, is fundamentally analytic, and then, at one remove, symbolic. Thus in *Reflections in a Golden Eye*, he has first decided on the emotional colouring the characters shall take, the atmosphere which shall bathe them, and then, instead of directing his actors to play towards this and colouring their performances accordingly, he has abstracted his ideas and embodied them instead in a single, pervading device, the 'washed' colour. He shows us, and we have to see, everything through this particular darkened glass, in the light he requires us to see it. And the device, though simple, is not merely mechanical in its functioning (like Antonioni's grey apples to suggest emotional aridity or scarlet decor to suggest animality). The shifting and mysterious way in which colour is apparently withdrawn, then elusively suggested, then left lingering in faint, inscrutable hints which are none the less teasingly, impalpably there, lends itself to no easy emblematic equivalence: it has the multivalence of a true symbol. (Oddly enough, the film still works without it, since the cooling-down process, playing everything against the insistent undercurrent of hysteria, proves a good idea anyway; but the film loses a whole dimension when not shown the way Huston intended.)

* * *

Once grasped, this abstracting tendency in Huston's method can be seen working for him in all sorts of contexts throughout his later films. Far from being the uncomplicated man of action, he is an aesthete at heart; he rarely approaches his subjects directly, but instead breaks them down into independent, coexistent spheres of thought and feeling, so

many objective correlatives. It is characteristic, for example, that in his new film *A Walk with Love and Death* he should set out to project the idea of the Middle Ages not by incorporating picturesque medieval detail into the body of the film, in the shape of elaborate costumes and sets, but rather to play all this down to a point as near non-committal as possible, and instead do it again indirectly, by colour calculated to suggest in density and dynamic range the quality of medieval tapestry. In *Moby Dick* an equivalent effect was achieved by a special colour process combining a colour print with a black-and-white print to suggest the visual quality of old whaling prints, with their colour faintly imposed on a black-printed key-plate.

This sort of aesthetic abstraction is not only to be found on the visual side of Huston's films. He is, after all, a writer as well as a director; he was a writer before he was a director, and even today, whether he explicitly takes a script credit or not, he is clearly the final arbiter in what shall or shall not be done in his scripts. And in these too a passion for abstract patterning can be observed. The extreme instance, I suppose, is *Freud: The Secret Passion*, a film which, if it is at fault for laying itself open to certain sorts of criticism which are fundamentally irrelevant, remains a surprisingly subtle and intelligent achievement when properly understood. It carries a step further the method of the pre-war Dieterle biographical films (Huston had a hand in scripting the best of them, *Juarez* and *Dr. Ehrlich's Magic Bullet*). A shape is imposed on, or ideally found in, the loose succession of events in a great man's life by following through some informing idea. In Freud's case the choice is obvious: his gradual move towards the formulation of his theory of the unconscious, and the notion that the roots of adult personality are in infant sexuality.

The film's exposition of this quest is rigidly schematic and abstract, being based on two cases which run more or less parallel: Freud's own, and that of the young woman patient played by Susannah York. Freud is still, just, a character, though a character so obsessed by one *idée fixe* that he already verges on the abstract. Cecily, the patient, on the other hand, is a complete synthetic abstraction, assembling in one person just about every symptom it is possible to imagine. This is clearly Huston's intention: that she should be no more than a sounding-board for Freud's own developing ideas. But the abstraction is not frankly enough presented as such. We persist in trying to read Cecily as one person, because the predominating realism of the film convention used is too much for us (on stage, for instance, we would be more likely to take her the right way); and thus the succession of lightning transformations ("Doctor, I'm not blind any more, but now I can't walk") becomes more than slightly ludicrous.

If we can overlook this disparity between means and ends, however, the film remains an extraordinary piece of conceptualisation. Freud's quest for truth into his own subconscious is made over into a sort of transcendental whodunit, each move in the investigation following immediately from the one before. Huston himself deplores the cuts made in the film by Universal (though accepting responsibility for their necessity), because he feels that too much of the process is removed, and Freud is left, like a magician, apparently plucking the right answer out of thin air. But the film as we have it does not come over that way: everything is built on a clearly exposed and explicit pattern of logical thought, and the visual and aural conventions used to indicate what is dream and what reality are perfectly sharp and precise. *Freud* is a film, deliberately, which is altogether open in its methods, with everything sharp and unambiguous. This is, surely, the only way in which a subject so intricate and involuted could be made to make sense dramatically at all. Easy to criticise

Huston's methods here as naive; but on second thoughts, not so easy to maintain that he does not know exactly what he is doing. And what he is doing, one cannot help thinking, that other old arch-aesthete Brecht would have recognised and approved.

* * *

In some of Huston's films, such as the charming and much underestimated *Heaven Knows, Mr. Allison*, the schematisation is already present in the subject: in that case the whole story is a playing-off of stereotypes—the Nun, the Marine—against more complex and unpredictable actualities. In others, one senses, it is precisely the challenge presented by amorphous or poorly balanced material which has been the prime motive force in Huston's determination to undertake an offered project.

Nearly always what appears to set Huston in motion is an intellectual challenge of some sort, a problem of adaptation or translation which can be solved only by use of constructive intelligence. In *Night of the Iguana*, for example, the play from which he has started is an up-and-down piece of Tennessee Williams nonsense with some great speeches but without any real centre, mainly because all the characters are too single-mindedly devoted to exemplifying the particular quirks assigned to them, or to playing their pre-arranged roles in the Williams pantheon. Huston manages to pull the thing together partly by accepting (as in *Reflections in a Golden Eye*) that the characters and their predicament can just as well—indeed better—be observed from a cool non-committal distance where it all seems more funny than tragic, but also by giving the story a new centre of gravity in the person of Maxine Faulk, as played by Ava Gardner.

In the original play there is no doubt left that Maxine is a bad woman, one in the long line of Tennessee Williams gorgons, savage, lustful old grotesques who live by devouring the entrails of his menfolk. To Huston, on the contrary, she is the only really sympathetic, life-accepting character in the piece, and he writes her and has Ava Gardner play her that way, so that the script has a new balance, a new positive emphasis. Here he is entirely successful. Unfortunately he is less so with the principal male character, the Rev. Laurence Shannon, since he seems to have been unable to convey to Richard Burton his own primarily humorous reading of the part. Without this, the opening sequence in particular looks as though it is accidentally grotesque when it was meant to be intentionally funny. But once that is over the film presents an exemplary piece of creative reconstruction, preserving the best of the play (the role of the other woman, Hannah Jelkes, beautifully played by Deborah Kerr) but placing it in a richer, more complex and ambiguous context.

* * *

In this process, of course, one factor we have not yet touched upon played a very important part: Huston's own highly personal sense of humour. If Huston likes subjects which give his mind room to function, working out patterns of people and events, and visual patterns to impose and define on them, he continues to do so only because he finds the whole process immensely enjoyable. The enjoyment may be primarily of an intellectual order—having the chance to realise on film pictures which haunt his imagination, as in the opening sequence of *Moulin Rouge* or the Creation sequence of *The Bible*. Or it may be, more simply, just fun. There is a lot of fun, too, in *The Bible*: obviously in the Flood sequence, with all the animals and Huston himself as Noah; more elusively, but surely present, in the Sodom sequence, with three Peter O'Tooles for the price of one (a curious and haunting effect in its own right, incidentally) and the whimsical notion of having, as it were, Lawrence/O'Toole playing a return match with the Bey of Deraa and brushing aside all suggestions of beastliness with one affronted glare of his blazing blue eyes.

And then there are the Huston films which seem to be made

entirely for fun: films like *Beat the Devil* and *The List of Adrian Messenger*. The great charm of these is that they are clearly made in cheery disregard of their audiences. The director doesn't give a damn—he will amuse himself, and if the rest of us aren't amused, well, that's just too bad. *The List of Adrian Messenger* was misunderstood at the time of its first appearance, like *Beat the Devil*, largely because nobody thought that Huston of all people would be so casual and dilatory as to play games on film. If he was making a thriller, then why did he not buckle down to making one properly, instead of messing about with teasing byways and elaborating fantastic irrelevances? But in *The List of Adrian Messenger*, now we come to look at it again on television, it is evident that the digressions are the essential: the whole thing is a series of enigma variations on the theme of disguise, both within the film's proper context and beyond.

The fundamental notion is rather like Agatha Christie's in *The A.B.C. Murders*: by establishing one obvious but essentially irrelevant pattern you can distract attention from the less obvious true centre of the intrigue. The villain, perhaps you recollect, is supposed to be a master of disguise. But once we tumble to the idea that the stooped little man with pince-nez who looks like Kirk Douglas in disguise actually *is* Kirk Douglas in disguise, and that the same goes for the various other shuffling anonymous figures who turn up from time to time in the film, then the interest in penetrating these various disguises will rapidly dwindle to nothing.

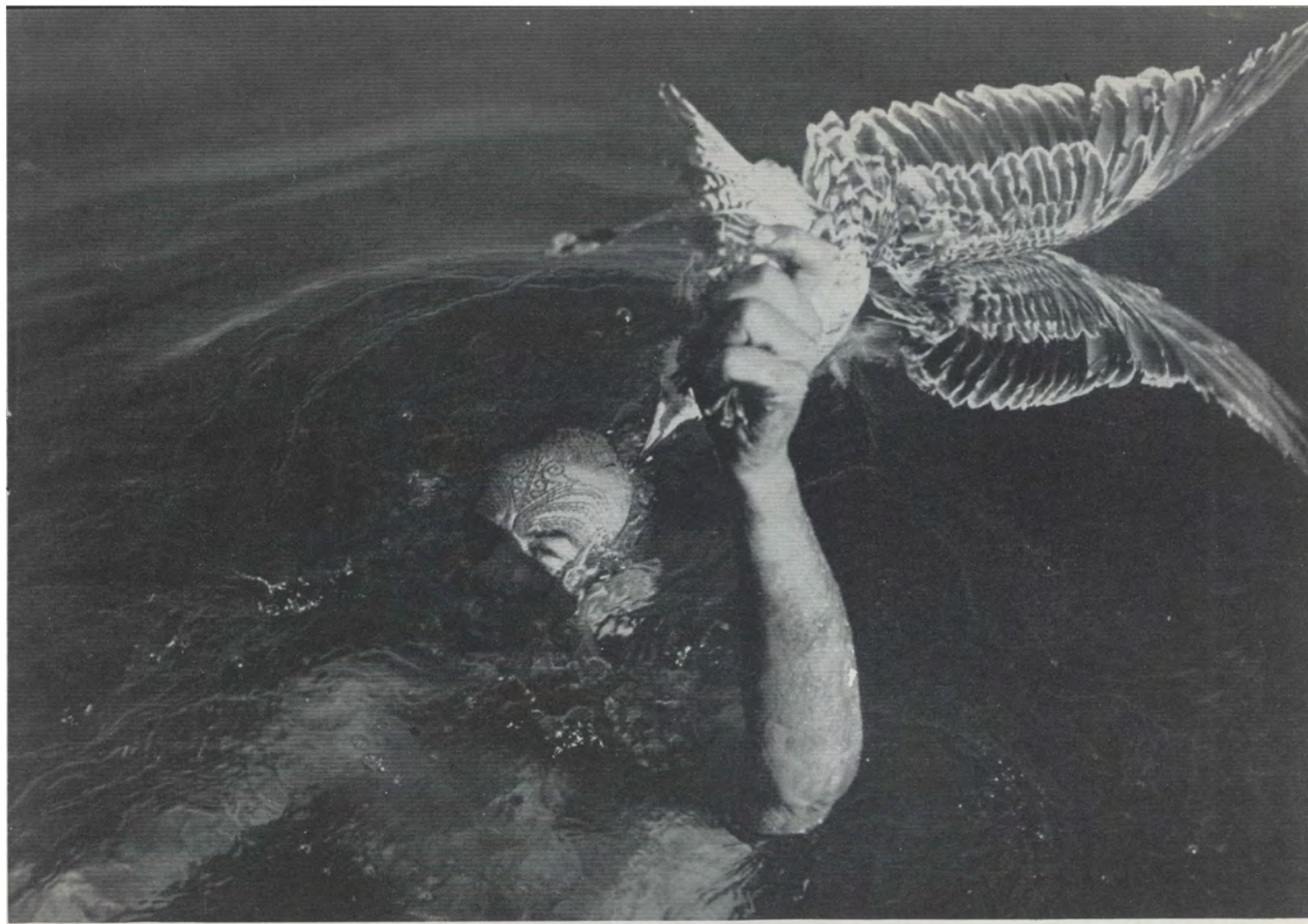
But what, thinks Huston, if everybody in sight is, or may be, disguised as someone else, so that our attention is about equally divided between trying to spot Kirk Douglas disguised as someone else with a purpose relevant to the plot, and trying to spot Burt Lancaster, Robert Mitchum and Frank Sinatra disguised for no reason connected with the plot, but just for the sake of disguise (the interest depending on our constantly remembering that this is a filmed fiction enacted by certain otherwise familiar people whose identity in life, as apart from the roles they play, we are all the time trying to guess)? A silly idea, possibly, but then if you are making a small joke of a film, with no other aim but to pass a pleasant 97 minutes, then the only test likely to be applied to theoretically silly ideas is whether they work or not. This one does: again, with disarmingly casual dexterity, Huston has hit on the formula which will pull the subject together, please his mind by making a satisfactory pattern out of it, and please us by its sheer cool effrontery.

* * *

For even in his most apparently whimsical, improvisatory jokes Huston remains the same man as in his most deadly serious films: a man who thinks first, and reaches creation only after exact analysis. He has made films which seem to have offered him too little for his mind to work on (*The Roots of Heaven*), or in which the interesting elements have failed to counterbalance the one inert immovable object in the centre (the pictorial values of Japanese art as against John Wayne in *The Barbarian and the Geisha*). But at his best—in *The Maltese Falcon* as much as in *Reflections in a Golden Eye*—the intelligence is formidable, the sense of sheer mental exhilaration at meeting and matching each problem as it comes up irresistibly infectious. It has been said of Antonioni that he is intellectual without being intelligent. One might say of Huston that he is intelligent without being intellectual. For a film-maker that may well prove in the long run the better way to be.

STILLS ON OPPOSITE PAGE

'Moby Dick': Friedrich Ledebur as Queequeg.
'The Bible . . . in the Beginning': George C. Scott as Abraham.
'Freud: the Secret Passion': Montgomery Clift.
'Heaven Knows, Mr. Allison': Robert Mitchum, Deborah Kerr.
'Reflections in a Golden Eye': Zorro David, Julie Harris.
'The List of Adrian Messenger': Dana Wynter, Kirk Douglas.



IN THE PICTURE

The B.F.I. Award, 1968

THE BRITISH FILM INSTITUTE Award for the "most original and imaginative film introduced by the National Film Theatre during the year" has been made to Jean-Marie Straub for his *Chronicle of Anna-Magdalena Bach*, shown during the 1968 London Festival and reviewed by Richard Roud in our Summer 1968 issue. Its premiere had originally been scheduled for the Critics' Week at Cannes last year, but the Festival broke down first. Subsequently it was shown at Berlin (where, not surprisingly, it was greeted rather coolly), and then unofficially at Venice. At New York's festival it was something of a triumph, but it would seem that it found its most enthusiastic audiences in London. One up to us, for a change.

This was Jean-Marie Straub's second feature: the first, *Nicht Versöhnt* (*Unreconciled*) had been shown at the 9th London Festival in 1965. Born in 1933 at Metz in Lorraine, Straub is a Frenchman who emigrated to Germany at the time of the Algerian War rather than fight in what he considered to be an unjust cause. Germany, because he already wanted to make a film about Bach. Furthermore, he spoke German: during the Occupation, it seems that the Germans considered all the inhabitants of Alsace and Lorraine ought to speak German, since they still regarded it as part of Germany.

The Bach film didn't come off right away, and Straub's first short, *Machorka Muff*, was an adaptation of a short story by Heinrich Böll. His first feature, *Nicht Versöhnt*, was also adapted from Böll, though after its stormy reception at Berlin in 1965, the author's publishers tried to get the film destroyed. Now he is completing an English version of *The Chronicle of Anna-Magdalena Bach*, due to be shown here shortly.

Straub's future plans involve leaving Munich, where he has lived for the past ten years, for Rome, where he is to make a film of Corneille's little-known tragedy of ancient Rome, *Othon*. It will be shot in the ruins on the Palatine Hill, with the complete

text of the play spoken in French by Italians. Their accents, together with the noises of modern Roman traffic, will no doubt make of 17th century *Othon* a fascinating dialectical exercise. Just as Straub's most recent short, *The Bridegroom, The Actress and the Pimp*, takes a three-act Bruckner play and, in 23 minutes, does some rather extraordinary things with it.

Statutory Deposit

OVER THE LAST ten years, the National Film Archive has selected 768 feature films for permanent preservation. So far, it has acquired only 186 of them. (Only one of 60 films chosen in 1967, which is perhaps an understandable time-lag; but only 27 of 84 chosen as long ago as 1960, which shows what the real gap looks like.) The present system, whereby the Archive depends on gifts, goodwill, and modest and very occasional purchase, clearly leaves enormous holes in the collection, to be filled up in some indefinite future as and when resources become available. It also means that the Archive often has to make do with prints which have already gone through a hard life on the circuits; and creates special problems over Continental films, where only a few prints are imported.

Parliamentary time being hard to come by, Dr. David Kerr's private member's Bill for Statutory Film Deposit is unlikely to become law this session. It asserts, however, proposals which are useful and in fact innovatory. Some other countries already have Statutory Deposit for films on the lines of the British system for books. Prints, that is, have to be donated to the national Cinémathèques; and presumably because of questions of finance, or conceivably national pride, the obligation is restricted to the national product.

Dr. Kerr's Bill would give Britain's Archive the right to demand a print of any 'moving picture produced from cinematograph film or magnetic tape' (to include TV) given public exhibition in this country. The new print would then have to be made available to the Archive at cost price—the bill to be footed by the Archive, and not by the supplier. Once in the Archive, the film would of course remain subject to all the usual copyright conditions.

The Bill is an ingenious approach to a tricky problem. It ought to allay trade fears (they are not to be asked to pay for prints). At the same time, it avoids any hazard that the Archive might become an insular repository for British films only. It doesn't—and as a private member's Bill couldn't—set out to solve the second problem: how to pay for the prints, once the Archive has the statutory right to acquire them. On present selection figures, the annual cost has been calculated at about £150,000. And although the principle of selection is open to challenge—how can any committee possibly guess what will seem to be significant at a remote future date; and what a hash a 19th-century painting committee might have made of a similar selection job—questions of cost and storage space impose their disciplines. At any rate, the Archive has no intention of abandoning its selective procedures, or of trying to apply Statutory Deposit—as with books—over the whole field.

First things, in any case, first. If the Archive can solve the theoretical issue, acquiring a right to prints of the films it needs, then it can approach the question of costs with a far stronger set of cards to play. Compared with the price of paintings, a film collection still looks a very cheap investment. Though with even film prints apparently taking on some kind of *objet d'art* status, it may not long remain so.

PENELOPE HOUSTON

"THE MADWOMAN OF CHAILLOT": GIULIETTA MASINA, KATHARINE HEPBURN, EDITH EVANS AND MARGARET LEIGHTON IN BRYAN FORBES' SCREEN VERSION OF THE GIRAUDOUX PLAY.



Cukor and Justine

THE MISFORTUNES OF Lawrence Durrell's *Justine* begin right after the publication of *The Alexandria Quartet* a decade or so ago and nearly match those of her Sadian eponym. What a temptation for the movie-makers to reduce that intricate tracery of character and locale, space and time, to one graspable cinematic strand. A dozen or so were mentioned as having undertaken, abandoned and reprised this most formidable literary property. At first, the late Walter Wanger held the screen rights. Joseph L. Mankiewicz took a two-year turn at telescoping all four books into one screenplay, a far from fortuitous choice if one keeps in mind *A Letter to Three Wives*, *All About Eve* and *The Barefoot Contessa* with their effective shifts of point of view. But this version proved too long and besides, would a composite version not end like a sort of *Rashomon* on the wrong side of the Mediterranean? During the *Cleopatra* hassle, the rights went to Darryl Zanuck who, in 1966, announced that Ivan Moffat (*They Came to Cordura*) had succeeded where seven writers and one movie critic had failed. Finally, last September, the picture got under way in Tunisia, with Pandro S. Berman producing for Fox and Joseph Strick directing from a screenplay by Larry Marcus, who has dwelt mostly on *Justine*, although references from the other books reverberate throughout.

After the definite, and highly debatable, success of *Ulysses*, Joseph Strick must have appeared to Hollywood as the Messiah capable of transmuting literature into sex, and even vice versa. There is no doubt that a subtle pressure is exerted on projects such as *Justine*, an unspoken suggestion to go as far as the traffic will bear. The first inkling came last summer when *The New York Times* ran a full page ad announcing the official launching of the picture and worded in an unmistakable mixture of awe for literary repute and the reassuring promise of dirty things to come ("And Dirk Bogarde as The Homosexual"). Then, in mid-November, after eight weeks on location, the company is recalled and Strick drops out from the film, a press release stating as reason a disparity of purpose with the producing company. (Maybe a mix-up of Justines.) Undaunted, Strick goes on to his next picture, an adaptation of Miller's *Tropic of Cancer*.

Justine becomes a Hollywood film and its Alexandria locations are built at the Fox sound stages, a decision that may appal devotees of Durrell—after all, didn't he conceive his characters as 'children of the landscape'?—but one that would have pleased André Bazin, who saw American film style begin to decline with the post-war passion for authenticity. Things take a sudden turn toward sanity when George Cukor is appointed to take over. It is Cukor's first picture since *My Fair Lady* almost six



CUKOR ON THE SET OF "JUSTINE" WITH ANNA KARINA.

years ago. He becomes, at 69, the oldest director now working in Hollywood.

Outside, the huge standing set of *Hello Dolly!* becomes more realistic with every sun-drenched passing day, but, once inside Stage Six at Fox, the atmosphere is timelessly Hollywoodian. Melissa's dance is on today's schedule, and a hundred-odd technicians and extras fill the set, an Alexandria cabaret of measured garishness, fluted Egyptian pillars and walls peeling off coats of Cherbourg blue and Pompeian red. Very exotic, very Oriental, with the faintest

tinge of the old Maria Montez fantasies about it. A special-effects man moves about the decor producing billows of grey, odourless smoke from a receptacle in his hand and placing it with the precision of a painter. *Justine* is being remade from scratch, there will be no matching of the Tunisian footage.

There is a sudden hush and the playback throbs with Eastern music while a small band of musicians mime their playing. The beads part as three Amazonian *houris* take the stage, followed by Anna Karina who plays the doomed, child-

CUKOR WITH ANOUK AIMEE AND DIRK BOGARDE.



like Melissa. She launches into her *danse du ventre* with pained abandon, a smile lacquered to her face, as the heavy camera follows her down on to the dance floor, stalking her gyrations from table to table, moving up for a close shot as she bends backwards to accept the donation that an elderly admirer (Cohen, perhaps?) slips under her bra.

The scene, involving so many disparate elements, is worked out with clocklike precision and is wrapped up in scarcely two minutes, with Cukor moving right along the camera. Waiting for the next shot to be set up, he instructs Karina in a confidential tone, formulating nuances with his hands, some kind of chemistry operating between the two. The point of the scene is to show off Melissa's inadequacy as compared to her fellow entertainers, all three of whom, incidentally, happen to be male, not professional transvestites but expert belly dancers.

Cukor has inherited a cast as motley as the characters in the novel: Anouk Aimée as Justine, Philippe Noiret as Pombal, Karina as Melissa. Clea does not figure in the movie and Balthazar and Mountolive are but minor roles, played by Severn Darden and George Baker respectively. Michael York is Darley, the narrator, and Dirk Bogarde Pursewarden, a heterosexual here as in the novel, despite Fox's claim to the contrary. Not a superstar in the whole lot, which means quite a gamble for such a large production. According to Bogarde, the real stars of *Justine* may well prove to be Cukor and Leon Shamroy, Zanuck's favourite cameraman, mostly remembered for the lush, Oscar-winning colour of *The Black Swan*, *Wilson*, *The Robe* and *Cleopatra*. Although the two men have known each other since the old Paramount days almost forty years ago, they have never worked together before, representing as they do somewhat opposed styles of film-making. Cukor, if you remember *Heller in Pink Tights* and *The Chapman Report*, likes his colour logical and toned down. Now that George Hoyningen-Heune is no longer alive to assist him as colour consultant, he seems more careful than ever.

One small, inspired bit of casting: a very old, very small woman, black-laced and bejewelled, sits patiently between takes, assisted by two middle-aged ladies, almost youthful by contrast, who treat her with great deference. The old actress, reminiscent of the late Ouspenskaya, seems to vibrate with quiet authority. Cukor has finished checking the lights, the camera is in position. He turns to the old lady: "All right, Miss Aguglia, we're ready for you now." The old lady rises with great dignity and takes her place next to a young hustler in a white shark-skin suit, behind the beaded entrance.

"Isn't she marvellous?"—says Cukor, beaming like a star-struck kid—"Mimi Aguglia used to be known as the Sicilian Duse more than fifty years ago. She came to New York with Grasso's company and specialised in plays like *Cavalleria Rusticana* and roles like *La Lupa*, which

Magnani has recently revived. You see, when I was your age and younger, I was very much like you are with films, only with me it was the theatre. I could tell you who had done what with whom. I did know about *some* movies, I remember Max Linder very well. Because of his comedies, the streets of Paris were familiar to me at a very early age. And *Fantômas*... I remember *Way Down East*, the Griffith film that impressed me most. I liked it better than the Limehouse story, *Broken Blossoms*.

"It's especially difficult to take over a film that one hasn't prepared oneself. I'm being extra careful, there is a language problem to surmount. I remember Lubitsch telling me about Camilla Horn's voice, when she played Marguerite in *Faust*. They were trying to post-sync that silent film in Astoria and, well, she looked like Marguerite but she had, according to Lubitsch, 'a drugstore accent'. He was very aware of this in German but in English the nuances escaped him, he couldn't hear the difference. He had George Barbier playing kings! A man who looked and sounded like a mid-Western grocer. It's awfully hard to get the nuance of speech, that's why I'm working so closely with Karina, she is such an excellent actress.

"I believe a modern virtuoso performance depends on this total command of language. Take Judy Holliday, for instance. You laughed and laughed and then, all of a sudden, you found yourself deeply moved. Laurette Taylor had that knack. Also, Judy Garland. I've always been highly interested in this problem of language. In fact, when I first came to California, I came to assist Richard Wallace, who was directing a picture called *River of Romance*. Originally, this was a very good play by Booth Tarkington (which, incidentally, I had *not* directed on the stage), a satire of Southern manners and morals that depended on an accurate approximation of Southern dialect. You see, this aristocracy was practically illiterate and you had to get all that in the movie. That's why I became a dialogue director in Hollywood.

"I also believe in working from the text but not *that* slavishly. You must respect it, especially if it's a distinguished text like *Justine*. Larry Marcus and I have gone back to the original. Durrell has something in the prologue to *Justine* which is the key, I think. Let me read it to you. 'I am accustoming myself to the idea of regarding every sexual act as a process in which four persons are involved. We shall have a lot to discuss about that.' It's from the letters of Sigmund Freud. It's like the story of someone's life, you have to find out what the principal element was. The same thing with the reflections of a love affair. One must try for the infinite complexity of the novel, however impossible.

"For instance, the scene you saw being shot. In the café scene, the script is nothing but a description of events: three dancers and the girl come out and she is inept. That's an intellectual con-

cept: an inept dancer could be pathetic or comic. The story point is that she doesn't have her heart in it. She has the professional smile but to her it's all a routine she's bored with. You have to render all that with the business you create for the girl.

"The three girls dance very well, they look strange, big, so I made them wear face veils and since you never really see them next to the real girl, you cannot be sure what they are. I think the audience will catch on right then and there. It has to be subtle. The more control you have over your work, the least apparent your hand should appear. Some directors obtain the same effects through other ways, I happen to work with the actors..."

CARLOS CLARENS

Edited extract from a forthcoming book on George Cukor in the CINEMA ONE series.

Work in Progress

ROBERT ALDRICH: After shooting *What Ever Happened to Aunt Alice?*, based on a thriller by Ursula Curtiss about a woman who murders a series of lady companions and plants them in her garden (with Geraldine Page and Ruth Gordon, for Palomar Pictures), is to direct Michael Caine, Cliff Robertson and Henry Fonda in *Too Late the Hero*, a 70 mm. World War II drama set in the Pacific.

KEVIN BILLINGTON: His first Hollywood film, *A Walk in the Spring Rain*. Script by Stirling Silliphant, about an affair between professor's wife Ingrid Bergman and Kentucky mountain man Anthony Quinn. For Columbia.

JACK CLAYTON: To produce and direct a film based on the life of Sir Basil Zaharoff, famous, mysterious armaments king of the First World War period. For Universal Pictures.

VINCENTE MINNELLI: To direct a screen adaptation of Alan Jay Lerner and Burton Lane's Broadway musical hit *On a Clear Day You Can See Forever*, with Barbra Streisand and Yves Montand. For Paramount.

SAM PECKINPAH: On location in Nevada and Arizona for *The Ballad of Cable Hogue*, a comedy Western with Jason Robards and Stella Stevens. Phil Feldman Productions for Warner Brothers-Seven Arts.

ROMAN POLANSKI: To film *Donner Pass* for Paramount. A dramatic account of the famous 1846 immigrant party trapped in the Sierras by an early blizzard.

ERIC ROHMER: Shooting *Ma Nuit chez Maud*, from his own screenplay about an unusual young engineer who finds love on the night after Christmas. With Jean-Louis Trintignant and Françoise Fabian. Films du Carrosse.

PETER YATES: Has started shooting on his second American film *John and Mary*. Set in New York, the film tells of twenty-four hours in the lives of two young people (Mia Farrow and Dustin Hoffman) who meet, mate and fall in love. For 20th Century-Fox.



MICE IN THE MILK

Philip Strick

AT THE END of *Secret Ceremony* we are told a parable. Two mice, the story goes, fell into a bucket of milk. One cried for help, and drowned. The other kept paddling until he found himself standing on butter.

Sooner or later in one's life someone knocks the ramparts down. Vulnerability, or the fear of it, are the conditions of mind that follow. Rebuild the defences, and they may never fall again. Leave them down, and the comfortable precincts of self lie open to erosion. As Losey's films appear in the reflection of *Secret Ceremony*, this dilemma seems to crystallise in each of them: cry for help (like the wife in *The Prowler*) and find betrayal, or preserve a growling independence (like the heroine of *Eve*) and settle for a fatal loneliness. If a balance exists between the two, Losey's characters rarely discover it. Rather, they seesaw wildly from one extreme to the other—the arrogant master changes places with the contemptuous servant, the rational scholar becomes a would-be rapist, the curt army officer turns ardent pacifist. The transitions, of course, do represent a kind of progress from fantasy to actuality, but the pendulum then swings further still and a new fantasy takes over. Whether it is an improvement or not Losey doesn't bother to mention; maintaining the utter detachment of his helicopter shot at the end of *The Criminal*, he is content to observe and to leave the deductions to his audience.

In a sense, Losey places himself actually *with* his audience. An intense curiosity is prominent in his films, as though he too were seeing the characters and their settings for the first time and felt slightly in awe of them. In *Boom* and *Secret Ceremony* the cameramen were different (Douglas Slocombe and Gerry Fisher) but the slow, contemplative tracking shots through richly furnished rooms are the same, with an identical awareness of textures, of mellow lights and shadows, and above all of an atmosphere of expectancy. In the Goforth villa, a servant, a bodyguard or a secretary could be just behind the next pilaster; in No. 8 Addison Road a mother, an aunt, or a father could wander in at any moment. Both films are constructed around the theme of intrusion, on the narrative level that of unwanted (but clearly vital) arrivals on the two islands of independence, and on the cinematic level that of an inquisitive audience on a series of tableaux which, like rocks, mosaics and furniture, have a centuries-old story to tell whether anyone listens or not. In their construction, *Accident*, *Boom*, and *Secret Ceremony*, an immaculate trilogy of introspection, resist almost tangibly the invasion of the critic, interpreter or commentator, turning him away with a reflective, flawless surface—the archetypal Losey mirror.

* * *

The trespasser in *Boom*, like the girl in *Accident* who preceded him, is a more complex individual than appearances at first suggest. Discounting, as one must, that he is portrayed by Richard Burton in a mood of cheerful hairiness that Tatsuya Nakadai would put to shame with one elegant eyebrow, his determined scrutiny of the dying days of Mrs. Goforth has a cannibalistic hunger about it which rightly goes far beyond what is hinted by the shots that introduce him (from a giant close-up of her jewelled hand to his figure tramping along the road). As he scales her mountain, his shouts echoing into her dictated memoirs, the regal disdain with which she chooses to ignore him has its own echoes of immortal omnipotence. If she is dying (and for all the injections and transfusions Elizabeth Taylor makes this rather too difficult to believe), she needs neither help nor sympathy in the process. But the visitor seems undeterred by her refusal to feed him or by the samurai robe she selects for him to wear, or by the way she describes the death of the original Goforth

"BOOM": RICHARD BURTON AND ELIZABETH TAYLOR.

over a loudspeaker system in the middle of the night, or delves into his luggage at gunpoint. Her armour, encompassing a small tribe of recalcitrant courtiers, is only proof against him for as long as she wears it; when she voluntarily weakens enough to invite him into her bedroom she finds, to her hazy surprise, that her guest has his own brand of integrity.

The splendid consistency of Mrs. Goforth is that as she dies she is still giving orders, and is still convinced, despite some early shudders at the Angel of Death label carried by her new parasite, that even if he doesn't want her he certainly wants her wealth. This pragmatic paranoia has, of course, always been demonstrated by Tennessee Williams' heroines, tragically unable to comprehend how their menfolk could have more perverse obsessions than woman-hunting; like Blanche in *A Streetcar Named Desire*, Mrs. Goforth revels in the philosophical turn of phrase ("My next chapter," she announces sweepingly, "is on the Meaning of Life") and in nostalgic memories of former loves. She denies strenuously that she is ill, despite the blood on her handkerchief, and composes herself for death on her Borghese bed as if for a brief doze. Whereupon the gleeful houseguest pitches her jewels into the sea. Boom—"the shock of each moment of being alive," he comments, with slightly jaded lyricism, as the waves pound their rhythm below.

It's the miscasting that throws *Boom* somewhat out of gear, coupled perhaps with the startling transposition from Williams' country to a Sardinian island. Given a magnificent location and the smooth lines of Richard Macdonald's white architecture, however, Losey has created a fable that transcends its players just as *kabuki* (the analogous references in the film need be strained no further) relies only on the most formal movements and expressions to convey its meanings. The timeless landscapes and luminous beauty of the interiors (the shot of Mrs. Goforth at last ordering dinner by the fireside would have been worthy of Dreyer if he had ever ventured into colour) convey far more powerfully than the brittle conversations on the terrace the extent to which the Goforth domain is peopled with living dead.

A flurry of wind breathes the impotent autobiography into chaos, the sunlight is too fierce or vanishes altogether (at one point, by an uncharacteristic lapse in continuity, reappearing firmly after the script has written it out), while the sea, in which the Angel of Death occasionally takes a dip, waits patiently to reclaim the lives that belong to it. Encompassed by such forces, the small span of Mrs. Goforth's intellect and influence is made pathetically clear ("I have lots of art treasures in my bedroom—myself included"), and her tyrannical charade rightly seems based on blindness. Her guest gives her a number of shocks by attempting to drag her off into the wilderness, but these serve only to accelerate her decline. Like the aristocrat in *The Servant*, she can be thrown out of her depth rather too easily, whereas her elusive companion seems to be familiar with all the currents, human or elemental. And he has the necessary merit of a sense of humour, obscured as it sometimes is by a ponderous dose of pontification. "You're not so tough that some day you're not going to need something that will mean God to you," he snarls, incorrectly as it turns out. But Elizabeth Taylor stands in the folds of a huge golden-headed sculpture, and as usual Losey's imagery speaks volumes more than his script.

* * *

Mrs. Goforth's secretary (not too well played but nicely personified by Joanna Shimkus) is something of a mystery, probably because she was intended to serve little more than dramatic convenience—a broadening of the Burton character—and yet insists, like so many Losey accessories, on assuming a life of her own. That she and Mrs. Goforth to some extent complement each other makes a noticeable preface to the double fantasy world which again is the object of invasion in *Secret Ceremony*. Here, the Tennessee Williams widow becomes a London prostitute, Leonora, who is dragged off to an immense house by a young girl who has apparently mistaken her for a parent.

To what extent the girl, Cenci (Mia Farrow), is aware of her self-deception is never quite clear; but Leonora, who lost a daughter some years ago, quickly enters into the spirit of the affair and settles in (very much in the Shimkus role, in fact). As with the Goforth household, their relationship is one of extremes, and by joint assent it is similarly insulated from what may or may not be unacceptable reality. The Angel of Death this time is Robert Mitchum who, as Cenci's step-father Albert, turns up unexpectedly from California to resume parental responsibility.

With *Secret Ceremony*, scripted by George Tabori from a prize-winning short story by an Argentinian civil servant, Losey has reverted to the tightly economical style of *Accident*, confining the languorous camera movements which were an essential embroidery on the *Boom* brocade to his few sight-seeing prowls among the Edwardian furniture and to some uneasy and dislocated floats in the climactic scene. The story of *Secret Ceremony* unfolds in a series of sharp, hard sounds (the slamming door is a repeated *motif*), crisply curtailed dialogues, and splendidly crystalline images—and like *Accident* it is concerned with sexual relationships which are described by hints and glances rather than by direct discussion. "Incest is a rather boring symptom of the private property syndrome," comments the step-father, acknowledging, Humbert-like, his agonised enslavement to the tantalising availability of Cenci (and, incidentally, establishing another link with the fiercely defended Goforth island); but whereas neither he nor Leonora is prepared to share the girl she merrily takes full advantage of both of them. By staging all the paraphernalia of rape in the bedroom she retains the dedication of Leonora, while the lecherous Albert is kept at bay until next required.

The confrontation between the two competitors on the sea-shore, in which jealousy becomes an ugly exchange of insults and a knife-slash, is where Cenci's convenient fantasy-world starts falling apart. The unforgivable destruction by Leonora of Cenci's mock pregnancy (a final refusal to share) brings the girl face to face with normality—and she resists it by taking the other swing of the pendulum in the form of a drugs overdose. Leonora, past reason in her private world of deprivation, kills Albert and returns to prostitution, which, as Godard has often remarked, makes no demands upon personal sanctity at all if you look at it the right way.

* * *

Where *Boom* kept its theology up its sleeve, *Secret Ceremony* gives the religious aspects of its morality play full measure. The bereaved mother visits her daughter's grave after passing a service of baptism in the church which stands like a marvellous relic in a barren bomb-site area. In assuming godparental rights to Cenci, as in effect she then does, she has undergone the "secret" ceremony that puts her on the same footing as the girl's step-father. Girl and mother then bath together and settle down for an afternoon nap under the crucifix, and Cenci offers a prayer to a God who listens during the day and worries at night. Thus fortified, they are strong enough to dispose of the two acquisitive aunts ("Cenci's mother never forgave us for being slightly Jewish"), but it is ironically while Leonora is away administering the possessive *coup de grâce* that Albert arrives home, and her visit to the confessional (asking for the right to hang on to her new daughter) coincides with Cenci's seduction. Self-sacrifice, it would seem, is not so easily distilled from self-interest.

So the story of the mice and the milk, a terse justification of private enterprise, sums up the struggles in both *Boom* and *Secret Ceremony*. The survivor wins nothing in either case, just as the competitors in *Accident* merely found themselves back at the starting line, but the intrusion by which battle was joined has illustrated yet again that interference is an ambiguous blessing. The cinema has got the best of it, as usual. From the delectable Goforth villa to the unique Debenham residence, eye-like dome and all, Losey's love affair with interior decorating has become a passion of operatic grandeur. The butter on which he stands has never looked more golden.



FRANÇOIS TRUFFAUT



LA SIRÈNE DU MISSISSIPPI





If I lose my leg I lose Rosie

HITCHCOCK: "One of the interesting aspects of the picture is that the action takes place in Switzerland. I said to myself, What do they have in Switzerland? They have milk chocolate, they have the Alps, they have village dances, and they have lakes..."

TRUFFAUT: "That's why the spies have their headquarters in a chocolate factory! You apply the same principle in *To Catch a Thief*. The

action is played out against the background of the Carlton Hotel at Cannes and the flower market in Nice, and the chase sequence is shot on the Grande Corniche."

YOU CAN DIP MORE or less at random into François Truffaut's *Hitchcock* and find similar characteristic exchanges. Truffaut is eager to draw the master out, but without guile, displaying an almost boyish enthusiasm for everything he has done, and for everything he says; telling

HITCHCOCK

VERSUS

TRUFFAUT

by Gavin Millar



over the most banal details of the action with spellbound relish. Hitchcock, for his part, flattered by the younger man's praise and knowledge, lulled by honesty, as he never would have been by guile, into revealing perhaps more than he knew he had and less, surely, than Truffaut would have liked. In his description, above, of *The Secret Agent*, Hitchcock clearly shows how his mind works and, incidentally, why he is one of the greatest popular entertainers in the cinema.

For, as Truffaut points out elsewhere, if creators are divided into 'simplifiers' and 'complicators', and if 'to be successful in the medium of the spectacle, one has to be a simplifier,' then Hitchcock is the arch-simplifier of all time. To be able to reduce Switzerland to those four 'national ingredients' without embarrassment or a sense of superficiality is the gift which enables Hitchcock to produce, year after year, pictures which

sell in every corner of the world. He generalises quite comfortably at the level of the lowest common denominator. In Java, Alaska, Finland and Peru, if the audience knows anything about Switzerland it will be that, and if it knows anything about the Riviera it will know about its dramatic highway. And for security, if it has never so much as heard of Switzerland or France, then the Alps are still high, the Grande Corniche dangerous, and the Carlton Hotel amongst the most expensive going.

This is fine for the world's audience. But what of sophisticated cinéastes such as Truffaut himself? Is this talent for simplification all he can see in Hitchcock? Clearly not. Nevertheless it's a talent which he deeply admires and envies, as he reveals in an uncharacteristically coarse paragraph in the introduction:

"The nature of Hitchcock's cinema is to absorb the audience so com-

pletely that the Arab viewer will forget to shell his peanuts, the Frenchman will ignore the girl in the next seat, the Italian will suspend his chain-smoking, the compulsive cougher will refrain from coughing, and the Swedes will interrupt their love-making in the aisles."

Truffaut would dearly love to be a popular film-maker himself, as he has often said, but the fact is that none of his films has been a popular international success and some of them have even struggled in France. For this reason he accounts them a failure. This attractive, though in my view wrong-headed, humility also puts him, as an interviewer, in an awkwardly inferior position. He praises Hitchcock's skill for a scene in *I Confess*:

"Otto Keller's wife, serving coffee to all the priests, keeps on passing back and forth behind Montgomery Clift, while she's trying to figure out what he plans to do. The dialogue between the priests is completely innocuous. It's only through the image that one understands that the essential of the scene is happening between the woman and Montgomery Clift. I don't know of any other director who can successfully convey that, or who even tries to."



"I CONFESS"

To this extravagant and, on the face of it, undeserved eulogy, Hitchcock makes no disclaimer. But neither does he carry the argument further. His reply is such a bland truism that we can only suspect he is patronising Truffaut:

"You mean the soundtrack says one thing while the image says something else? That's a fundamental of film direction. Isn't it exactly the way it is in real life? People don't always express their inner thoughts to one another; a conversation may be quite trivial, but often the eyes will reveal what a person really thinks..."

Truffaut seems unable to jolt the discussion of theory on to any plane other than the exchange of mild clichés. Perhaps he is unaware of the problem. And yet his twin assertions in the introduction that Hitchcock is a major influence on world cinema and that he is grossly underrated seem to demand a level of response from Hitchcock himself beyond anything which the book gives us. Though Hitchcock, through the sim-

plicity and clarity of his work, says Truffaut, is the *most* accessible to a universal audience, he is also the director who *excels* at filming the *most* complex and subtle relationships between human beings. This is such a large claim, and Truffaut's own acknowledgment of Hitchcock's influence on himself so striking, that, despite disappointments, we would do well to glance again at what Truffaut says he finds in Hitchcock, and what impact it seems to have made on his own work.

* * *

Truffaut describes how Hitchcock hinges his plots round striking coincidences; how he imposes the arbitrary on us by engaging our emotions rather than our reason; how the innocent hero is involved in intrigue and how he can oddly be seen, in the end, to share some of the guilt; and indeed how the audience can be involved too by being made to share it with him. All these matters are commonplaces of Hitchcock criticism, but it is certainly interesting to have Hitchcock himself corroborate them by recalling specific instances when he has consciously striven for an effect. It's also intriguing to see that, details and 'touches' aside, the main line of his work is wholly intuitive. He resists suggestions that he chooses only one basic plot involving the transference of guilt and the assumption of common, perhaps original, sin. He makes light of his Jesuit upbringing and its effect. All he will say about his theory of film-making is that he is determined to give his audience not 'a slice of life, but a slice of cake'. The eye must dazzle, the breath catch, the heart pound for every one of the ninety minutes or the great magician feels he has failed.

No general philosophy of life emerges from Hitchcock's avowals even after days of questioning and discussion. There is rarely an idea which is unrelated to technical problems of film-making or general psychological problems of audience manipulation. If he operates as an intellectual at all it is in this area alone that he does it. Granted, Truffaut claims nothing for him on the level of the discussion of ideas; all he will say is that Hitchcock, along with other 'artists of anxiety', such as Kafka, Dostoevsky and Poe, 'can hardly be expected to show us how to live; their mission is simply to share with us the anxieties that haunt them.'

And it's true that it would be absurd to judge Hitchcock's work, or even his replies, in the terms we might reserve for literary criticism. Nevertheless, his unshakeable aplomb and self-confidence sometimes lead him into contradictory and empty analyses of his work, with which Truffaut too often falls into step. There is an uncomfortable discussion of the demerits of plausibility which grandly avoids the real issue. Hitchcock recalls the ornithologist in *The Birds* who happens to be in the restaurant in Bodega Bay when people are talking

about the birds. He could have made up several reasons for her being there, he says, but didn't think it worth the trouble. And in the event he may be right. But he goes on from there to assert that 'if you're going to analyse everything in terms of plausibility or credibility, then no fiction script can stand up to that approach, and you wind up doing a documentary.' He concludes that as God is the creator of the basic material of documentary, so the director is the creator of the fiction film:

"He must create life. And in the process of that creation, there are lots of feelings, forms of expression, and viewpoints that have to be juxtaposed. We should have total freedom to do as we like, just so long as it's not dull. A critic who talks to me about plausibility is a dull fellow."

Duly warned, perhaps, Truffaut allows the point to be blunted this time. Another opportunity occurs later. Hitchcock confesses that he was worried about a flaw in the story of *Vertigo*. How could the husband, about to throw his wife off the tower, be sure that James Stewart wouldn't make it up the stairs because of his dizziness? Truffaut, not wishing to be a dull fellow, politely replies that he 'saw it as one of those assumptions you felt people would accept.'

In other words, plausibility *does* matter. Well of course we know it does. Sometimes it matters less, sometimes it matters a lot. Both Hitchcock and Truffaut know it as well, and maybe the book would be even better if Truffaut had been less agreeable and had, unhumly, pulled Hitchcock up from time to time in order to discover just when and how such ideas as plausibility get into our heads and control our response to works of quasi-representative art which some have bracketed with *The Trial*, *The Castle* or *The Brothers Karamazov*...

* * *

Of course it wouldn't have been easy. When Truffaut does worry the point a little in the discussion of *The Wrong Man* he gets a rather dusty answer. Truffaut complains mildly that he finds the customary Hitchcock stylisation at odds with the documentary nature of the story. Hitchcock's first response is to tell him he has to remember it was being made as a commercial picture. Truffaut apologises for harping on it but hopes Hitchcock doesn't mind. Hitchcock doesn't mind but 'feels that it's rather a difficult thing to analyse.' Truffaut, being really dull now, suspects the trouble is with the direction:

T. "You're trying to make the public identify with Fonda, but when he goes into his cell, for instance, you show the walls spinning in front of the camera. That's an anti-realistic effect. I feel it would have been a good deal more convincing if you had simply shown Henry Fonda sitting on a stool in the cell."



"THE WRONG MAN."

H. "Maybe so, but wouldn't that be rather dull?"

T. "Frankly, I don't think so, because this case history has a dramatic strength of its own. It should have been done in a very objective way, with the camera always at normal level, like a documentary; it should have been handled like a newsreel reportage."

H. "It seems to me that you want me to work for the art houses."

So, if we want to form a picture of Hitchcock as a conscious artist as well as an entertainer, we had better go about it another way. No amount of straight questioning will elicit a coherent philosophy, and may lead instead to contradictions and misunderstanding. If there is a complex and beautiful pattern in the best of his work, a pattern that other artists will want to copy, it will surely be an intuitive one, and may emerge incidentally from what he allows us to learn of his upbringing and character.

He talks of his fear of evil as a boy, of his fear of physical punishment. He talks about the time his strict father sent him with a note to the local superintendent of police, a friend of his, asking that Alfred be locked up for a while to teach him a lesson. Rohmer and Chabrol have suggested it was overnight, but Hitchcock here speaks of it as 'five or ten minutes'. He confesses that he has always had a fear of the police, and a lively identification with the arrested victim, especially of course if he happens to be innocent. He was always a lonely child, preferring to observe rather than take part. He is anxious always to control events himself and never be at a loss—one reason for his elaborate pre-planning.

"I'm full of fears and I do my best to avoid difficulties and any kind of complications. I like everything around me to be clear as crystal and completely calm. I don't want clouds overhead. I get a feeling of inner peace from a well-organised desk. When I take a bath I put everything neatly back in place. You wouldn't even know I'd been in the bathroom. My passion for orderliness goes hand in hand with a strong revulsion towards complications."

Allowing for the humour, this seems a very accurate and comprehensible portrait. Before Hitchcock ever went to America, he says, he was completely familiar with the map of New York. He used to send away for train schedules and learn them by heart. That was his hobby. Years before he ever went there he could describe New York 'and tell you where the theatres and stores were located.' Not the people though. Throughout the book there is no single reflection about the character of the American people, as a nation or as individuals. Small wonder that Alfred Hitchcock has been described as a director of the *film de situation*. Does it mean that his conception of fate will not allow him to create a *film de personnage*? Or is it simply his conception of drama?

At any rate it is difficult to find anywhere in his work a situation which is fluid enough to be controlled by character. Truffaut recalls the instance in *The Thirty-Nine Steps* when Mr. Memory, in response to a question and following his professional habit, cannot resist blurting out the truth about the spying and is consequently shot by the ringleader sitting in the audience. Character is a very small tail on the end of the big dog Situation. Does this extreme stylisation conceal pessimism or a lack of interest? It is not only that he is more interested in the process than the people, but also that he is fooling himself, and us, in assuming that he can study the former while ignoring the latter.

For along with the gifts of stylisation, simplification and generalisation, isn't there also the danger of their excesses: glibness, superficiality, coldness, arrogance? People are not calm. They bring with them clouds and complications, and one wonders sometimes if Hitchcock's passion for making films is a passion for order at all costs, for resolving otherwise impossible moral dilemmas by putting the protagonists in a situation which he alone can control.

There are those critics who perceive behind Hitchcock's simplicities a pattern of beautiful moral complexity. Perhaps we should number Truffaut among them. For them obviously this objection will be hopelessly inept. We must therefore look more carefully, following their lead, for the beauties concealed in what Rohmer and Chabrol call, with great regularity, '*ces trames fort banales*'.

* * *

No one would think it worth condemning *The Lady Vanishes*, for example, for its banal plot. It's a delightful, absurd, romantic thriller, told with great skill and humour. But because it might be classed as an unexceptionably agreeable example of British Hitchcock, it might equally well serve to isolate a few of the characteristics we are talking about, before we go on to weightier topics. In the first place, it's easy to spot the villain, and that's very reassuring. He sports a cruelly trimmed moustache

and wears gloves at all times. His accomplice's disguise as a nun is easily seen through since she is still wearing her high heels. Though Hitchcock's speciality is said to be that of revealing the menace beneath the ordinary, it is less often pointed out that you don't have to look very hard to see that the ordinary is rather odd to start with.

There is a nice moment when the train halts at a cold and sunny country station in the Balkans, and sits for a minute steaming peacefully. We just know something awful is happening. Later there will be the famous line in *North by Northwest*: roughly, 'That's funny—he's dusting crops where there ain't no crops to dust.' There is the bird which crashes into the schoolteacher Annie's door in *The Birds*, which she explains by pointing out that it's dark, till Melanie shows her the full moon. From time to time Hitchcock certainly does strike the authentic chill of false appearances, but often his effects are muffled by the



"THE LADY VANISHES": PAUL LUKAS.

opposing pull of caricature. In a comic thriller like *The Lady Vanishes* it is an advantage that the clues which betray normality should be, as they are, tiny but glaring. If ever there was an opportunity for Hitchcock and Truffaut to defend the glories of implausibility it is surely here.

Miss Froy writing her name in dust on the window like a ghostly reminder, the adulterous Cecil Parker's girl friend changing sides as often as he proffers and withdraws the lure of divorce, the unflappable Basil Radford and Naunton Wayne refusing to believe their coach has been slipped on to a branch-line since their luggage is still in the first-class compartment; above all the vital clue which convinces Iris it wasn't all a dream, the label of Miss Froy's own Horniman's tea, flung with the rubbish from the galley only to paste itself across a window further down the train slap opposite the troubled gaze of Margaret Lockwood herself.

There is a certain ritual elegance in caricature, and in a situation like *The Lady Vanishes*, gloved villains and well-heeled nuns are literally in their element. But we are being asked to consider Hitchcock's more serious work for its moral complexity, and I am suggesting that the method of *The Lady Vanishes* is the method of all his work, that it's never more appropriate than it is here,

and that when it's bent to the service of subjects which cannot easily be caricatured it's a disaster. By that I mean that it only works at the expense of the subject itself.

If we move on a few years to the wartime *Saboteur*, what we see is the espionage game of *The Lady Vanishes* suddenly become deadly earnest. It may be objected that all war films made in wartime are subject to the strains of propaganda, and we can make a few allowances—but not many. The subject is serious and Hitchcock, let us give him the benefit of the doubt, is serious too. Freedom is at stake.

Let's consider for a moment what the function of that method we've been talking about is—the revelation of the menace beneath the ordinary. We know what the effect on our emotions is. If it works it strikes a thrill of surprise or horror into us: which, you might feel, is reward enough. But if Hitchcock has a more serious purpose then we may suppose that its function is to warn us, or teach us to make finer distinctions, more accurate judgments, fewer glib assumptions: to make us, in other words, leaving morality out of it, more efficient and aware. We might expect Hitchcock then to take stock responses not in order to play on them but to expose them. What happens in *Saboteur*?

The first thing Hitchcock does is to flatter the audience by allowing them to spot the saboteur before anyone in the whole airplane factory. Fry is a born saboteur: shifty, surly, mean-spirited, he won't even pass the time of day with you, and when he hands the hero's pal a fire extinguisher full of petrol to put out a fire he's started himself, well, it's just the sort of mean, shifty kind of trick we might have expected of him. And yet, would you believe it, everybody thinks the hero, Barry Kane, has done it himself. In the cab of a lorry driving through the night, on the trail of Fry, himself hounded by the police, Kane sits brooding on his fate. The cab wall behind his head is yawningly empty, but right next to his ear, so close you fear he's going to bump against it and set off some new and frightful calamity, there's a tiny fire extinguisher. Tiny, but glaring. As if that's not enough, the lorry driver, irrepressibly insensitive in the way that they are, begins to tell Kane why he carries it: because a pal of his was in an accident and almost before they could get the guy out—whoosh... Now there is no dramatic purpose whatsoever served by this story, except to heap, as it were, coals of fire on poor Kane's head. And yet it's exactly the same kind of event in tone as the sudden death by strangulation of the village songster in *The Lady Vanishes*. But where that event, comic and grisly, too, was both organic and witty, this one, because of its context, approaches bad taste. If this is a revelation of menace in the ordinary, what is its lesson?

Kane stumbles upon a log cabin in the rain and is welcomed inside by blind

pianist Philip Martin. It is a characteristic of blind people that they hold their heads very high and look a long way ahead, with a steady gaze and a faint suggestion of a smile playing about their lips; and it could well be that Hitchcock started this tradition. If he did, he started it for Philip Martin. This sensitive and wise old bird is responsible for more dangerous nonsense in ten minutes than you'd think possible, but we are to pay attention to it, for in his hands lies the defence of freedom. He is, after all, blind and even-handed Justice, and it is his faith in the hero which will lead Kane to fight for freedom on the Statue of Liberty herself.

He has heard Kane's handcuffs, but makes no mention of it. Though he knows about the saboteur on the run and suspects Kane, he resists his niece's suggestion that he be turned over to the police. Why? Principally because, as always, situation rather than character demands it. Partly because this is the prescribed behaviour for such stereotypes and Hitchcock wisely doesn't disappoint the audience. But if we listen to Martin himself the reasons are quite interesting. He says he has always believed that a man is innocent until proved guilty—which is not relevant, since the man is wanted for questioning and not hanging. He says that sometimes the right way for a man involves him in disregarding the law—so that he is clearly willing to give Kane the benefit of the doubt on no evidence whatsoever. He says—and it's a statement which brooks no reply, for a variety of reasons—that 'he can see innocence'.



"SABOTEUR".

He is willing to involve his neighbours too in his wide-ranging redefinition of justice, democracy and freedom, for he instructs his niece to drive Kane to the local blacksmith to get his handcuffs struck off on the recommendation that Mr. Kane is 'his friend and his guest'. 'Go with her, Barry,' he counsels finally, 'go ahead Barry, go ahead and do the things I wish I could do': a moral ambiguity which this time, perhaps, Hitchcock hardly intended.

Miss Martin is not to be drawn into this web of speciousness and plans to hand Kane over to the police after all. But he turns the tables and, tricking her into coming with him, jumps a passing circus van at night. It houses the circus

freaks—Siamese twins, bearded lady, dwarf, etc., and there is more talk of sex in this short episode than seems called for, incidentally, though it may not surprise those who have studied Hitchcock's fetishism. At any rate the circus folks can see that here's a young fellow on the lam from something or other, and Esmeralda, who can tell a hawk from a handsaw too, looking at the nonplussed Patricia Martin, gets everything hopelessly wrong and concludes, 'It's the good people who stick when anyone's in trouble.' This throws Miss Martin into confusion, as well it may. For here, doing exactly the same as Philip not ten minutes ago, judging by intuition and appearance, trusting to faith and goodness, Esmeralda has come badly unstuck. Ah, say admirers of Hitchcock's moral universe, there you have the exquisite complexity of the thing. You thought you could make an easy judgment, and now you have been rapped over the knuckles. But it's more complicated than that even. For the fact is, a judgment has been made, and we are being invited to admire it, and it's an equivocal hotch-potch, both spurious and sententious. Despite this resounding demonstration of the fallibility of instinct, Miss Martin decides that Esmeralda's simple faith is good enough for her, and as she has been judged, so shall she live. She decides to stick with Barry.

We have promised to make allowances for the fact that this is a wartime movie. So perhaps we can allow the naïve horror of the collaborator Tobin and his lust for power, as well as the simplistic view of international politics. We shall have to allow too, perhaps, the sonorous clichés of Kane's fighting speech: 'The world's choosing up sides and I know which side I'm on,' though we might glancingly refer to it as an inappropriate set of guidelines to moral maturity. But is there nothing to be said about that greatest 'Hitchcock touch' of all, the final struggle between Fry and Kane on the torch of the Statue of Liberty?

Here, after all, is the centre of the moral world that I recognise as Hitchcock's, at once the heart of his method and the essence of his vision. A single, simple, dazzling image in which the forces ranged against one another throughout the film are finally opposed in as bald and concrete a way as possible. We can all think of such images: Bruno and Guy struggling on the bucking carousel; Scottie conquering his longing to fall and his fear of falling on the stairs of the mission tower; the audience itself confronting the skeleton in Norman Bates's cupboard; James Stewart's photographer reflecting the murderer and his knife in the telephoto lens; the birds swinging high above helpless Bodega Bay as they mass for another attack; most famous perhaps of all, Roger Thornhill fighting for his life on Mount Rushmore.

There are many moments like these in

Hitchcock and many of them are magnificent, that's to say magnificent emotional climaxes. But it seems to me few of them sustain any intellectual scrutiny (some do: *Rear Window* and maybe *Psycho*); and if we are told that they represent complex intellectual statements then I suggest that we are being taken in by Hitchcock's emotional blackmail.

Look back at Barry Kane and Fry on the Statue of Liberty. We are agreed about Hitchcock's ability to crystallise abstract ideas in a concrete image. What is not clear is that in the process of simplification certain essential refinements in the thought may be lost, certain qualities in the characters may be blurred. In this case he is working with a very simple symbol. It's so simple in fact that we smile at the outrageousness of it, at what we call Hitch's 'cheek'.



"NORTH BY NORTHWEST".

But perhaps it really is cheek. We, sophisticated image-readers that we are, take pleasure in the enormity of the trope, at the outrageousness of the conceit. But there's something not quite right about it. We are also laughing partly at the audience for whom such an image can be taken at face value, or for whom this gesture may be at the limit of their grasp of the language of symbolism.

There may be an audience—in Java, Alaska, Finland and Peru—for whom this very image opens astounding doors, establishes forms of connection they had never suspected. For them it's a betrayal. A struggle for liberty in the outstretched hand of Liberty herself is not a joke to that audience. But why is it a joke to us? Because we can see the absurdity of the simplification. The image cannot be read at the level on which we are invited to read it because to do so we should have to shut our eyes to the fact that the symbol and the referent are separated by a vulgar—and not comic—incongruity.

Why do I pick on a not very successful propaganda picture to choose examples from? Because it is propaganda, and the most dangerous propagandist is the one who wants to bludgeon his audience into submission. Exactly the same things could be said about the Mount Rushmore sequence, except that *North by Northwest* is a comedy, and it makes a lot of difference. But *Shadow*

of a *Doubt*, for instance, isn't a comedy, and it's said to be Hitchcock's favourite picture. It's skilfully made, beautifully acted, tightly scripted by Thornton Wilder, and full of the stock-in-trade, suspense. But it's also deeply reassuring where it should raise doubts, and violently unsettling where it needn't be. Small-town family life is not really represented at all, but only a sort of cleaned-up *Saturday Evening Post* version of it. Here the worst sins are pop and his crony discussing murder on the verandah, and the greatest household curse smart kids. There's nothing here of the strains of real living as W. C. Fields might represent them in just such a household. And when Uncle Charlie comes to do his murders, well he doesn't really impinge either. He's a figure from Nightmare, not the American Dream, from back East, from the Past. Nor is his aberration a criticism of society. He fell off his bike when he was a kid and bumped his head. The presentation of the ordinary is deceptive and the menace is unreal.

Of course Hitchcock has made fine pictures—from *Strangers on a Train* in an almost unbroken chain through to *Psycho* there is nothing that isn't fascinating and made with superb technical skill. And they not only have good stories they have ideas, too. But they are for the most part simple, unitary ideas, rising directly but perhaps unconsciously from Hitchcock's own needs rather than thoughts. When they are complicated they are complicated by a fog of fears and anxieties which he knows too well how to exploit, because they are his too: the fear of chaos, the thirst for order, the fear of imprisonment, the lure of sexual abnormality,



"SHADOW OF A DOUBT".

the loving hatred of authority.

Most dangerous of all, he knows how to exploit them in the audience, to manipulate situation at the expense of character, to manipulate our emotions at the expense of rational choice. When he generalises it is not to expose a universal principle but to reaffirm a stock response, to make the Statue of Liberty stand for Freedom and a box of chocolates represent Switzerland. When he chills and horrifies us it is not to purge but to reinforce the fears that detach us from reality. To find evidence of a subtle and complex sense of morality you have to be prepared to agree with one critic, for example, that when Mark Rutland tells Marnie, 'Well, I didn't say I was perfect . . .' his words indicate the 'acceptance of necessary moral imperfection that gives him his maturity.' It seems more typical to me of the real choices offered to Hitchcock's characters when Gus Smith, facing amputation in *Lifeboat* and remembering his dancing partner back home, protests: 'If I lose my leg I lose Rosie.'

The widow wore white

IN ANY UNIVERSE neatly controlled by the proper processes of logic Truffaut would have nothing to do with Hitchcock. How could the spiritual son of Jean Renoir, warm, lyrical, contented, expansive son of the painter himself, who never planned a shot till the moment was on him and who was open to everyone's suggestions, possibly have any sympathy for the master of solitary pre-planning? The fact is of course he does, and we must therefore think again. All the evidence we have to go on however, or all the evidence that counts, is his films, and if we are to believe our senses, he is as far from being another Hitchcock as we might have expected. This will please some, and not others.

William Irish, under the name Cornell Woolrich, wrote the story on which *Rear Window* is based, and he wrote too the novel *The Bride Wore Black* from which Truffaut has drawn his most apparently Hitchcockian film. What he has done to the original book is a good guide to the distinctions we might make between him and his avowed master.

The book is a crude, coarse *policier* concerning a young and attractive woman whose husband was killed on the steps of the church after their wedding. She pursues, tracks down and murders four of the five men she thinks were accidentally responsible. But it is only at the end of the book, when she has failed to kill the fifth and is arrested,

that we learn how her husband died, and the reason for her vendetta. All we can see, throughout the course of the book, is a series of murders, as inexplicable and unconnected to the detective who investigates them as they are to us. In the event the men, who seem to have fired from a car, were innocent. It was an old friend and business partner of her husband's, and would-be lover of hers, who shot him deliberately from across the road. She has killed the wrong men.

Truffaut moves the action from New York to the South of France and the Alps—an unlocated *vie de province*. The detective and his laborious investigation disappear almost entirely. The fifth victim is dropped and a totally different number five substituted. She manages to kill them all and they are all involved in, if not exactly responsible for, the killing. Only two episodes extraneous to the pursuit and dispatch of the five victims are included: where a schoolteacher is briefly suspected and instantly cleared by a telephone call from the woman, Julie Kohler; and where she visits a priest, not so much to confess, as she says, but to get the strength to go on with her revenge. The action is otherwise pared cleanly to an account of the five pursuits and deaths, with two important flashbacks. The first, during the second episode, shows the church and wedding party and the sudden death by shooting of the husband. The second, much longer, during the third episode, shows how a group of casual friends who meet to play cards accidentally allow a loaded rifle to be fired from the flat in the church square, with fatal consequences. They split up, vowing never to meet again.

Truffaut and Hitchcock speak often in the book about the difference between suspense, surprise and mystery. Hitchcock confesses himself bored by mystery since all the meat has to come in a rush of explanation at the end. Surprise is an emotion which audiences enjoy, but they both prefer suspense, since it involves the audience knowing everything and being continuously excited. By introducing the flashback at an early stage Truffaut solves the mystery but creates suspense. But having gone as far as Hitchcock with this device, Truffaut goes, willy-nilly, further still. Since he has explained Julie's situation so clearly he cannot refrain from investigating her motives; and since the situation is so extreme, the motives must involve a deal of pain, and we are not spared it.

Julie Kohler is an incomparably more attractive and intelligent figure than the Julie Killeen of the book, who is apt to deliver herself of lines like 'What difference does the name of a place make when you're gone beyond recall?' and, in response to a question from her sister ('Julie, what can I say to you?'), 'Just goodbye. What else is there to say to anyone ever—in this life?' It would be difficult to work up the necessary feeling for such a character's fate in the film.

Julie becomes a reserved and mysterious intelligence moving with dreamlike efficiency in her task, adopting the necessary protective colouring at will, breaking out with emotion only once in the flashback, and once with the priest. It's clear that the theme of transferred guilt is handled with multiple variations here, but, interestingly enough, its most explicit appearance—when the teacher Mlle. Becker is accused—is nipped instantly in the bud by a crisp telephone call from Julie, giving details which must release her. It's almost as though Truffaut decides that this one episode—which might have provided the plot of a whole Hitchcock film—grows too foolishly implausible if prolonged.

For it becomes clear that what really intrigues him is character and not situation. This is hardly a surprise, but it is interesting to see how his customary skills adapt to the rigid framework of the suspense story. He takes the bare bones of Irish's characters and fills them out till they are transformed. I had better declare an interest here, apparently a rather uncommon one. I think *The Bride Wore Black* is a dazzling film. Beyond the mediocre murder mystery lies a parable about affronted virginity in conflict with five types of guilty male sexuality. Take the case of M. Coral, a typical Truffaut figure. A bachelor, middle-aged, conscious of his bald patch, gentle, timid, unsuccessful with women, perhaps fearful of impotence, searching for a dream woman who doesn't exist: in some respects a reincarnation of Charlie in *Tirez sur le Pianiste* (whose name we remember was Koller). Julie Kohler answers his dream, as she answers all their dreams.



"THE BRIDE WORE BLACK".

But our pleasure and pain is not only in seeing how she dispatches him, but in seeing what he makes out of her before the end comes. In the intensity of his wonder, now, we can read the emptiness of his past. Our first glimpse of him as he strides off up the street outside his hotel is compounded by our view of the maid which follows. She leans out of the window of his room, watching him walk away, shakes a red duster into the air and closes the window. We don't need to be told any more about his relationships with women. After his mysterious invitation he arrives in the loge for the concert, and though the loge is empty

takes a back seat. Only later, when he has gained a little confidence, does he move forward. On the stage a young man and woman are playing the cello and piano. They are very absorbed in their task in an agreeably comic way. M. Coral watches them. He seems amused and touched. Julie arrives. A close-up of the performers lets us see them as faintly comic, but it's an affectionate view. For M. Coral they are an absorbed and happy partnership—perhaps a foretaste of his own coming happiness. Julie offers him a dream in a glass of poisoned arak and sits buttoning her gloves as he gasps to death in surprise at her feet.

Julie is the dream woman for all of them. For Morane the bourgeois, walled up, as he is suffocated by his own domesticity, she is everything a capable, tidy, attractive, ego-flattering wife-servant ought to be. For Fergus the artist, potential lover, pierced by Cupid's dart, she is the unattainable ever-mysterious, ever-sought model. For the crooked car-dealer Holmes, brutally sexual, knifed to death in the most personal act of murder of them all, she presents herself as a tart and a criminal. For Bliss, at his engagement party, a young man, handsome, debonair, about-town, she is dazzling and virginal in bridal white. She asks him to reach out from the balcony for her white scarf, caught on the awning. She pushes him off into space and her scarf, both beauty and virginity, whirls and dances for minutes in triumph over the roofs.

So, in a sense, the fates do take a hand after all to manipulate the characters towards their deaths. But Truffaut has the best of both worlds. For while he trims and clips the situations, he never relaxes his steady gaze on the characters, and by keeping both in sight, seems to show that destiny can also be character and not simply the mechanical hand of vengeance, obsession or guilt.

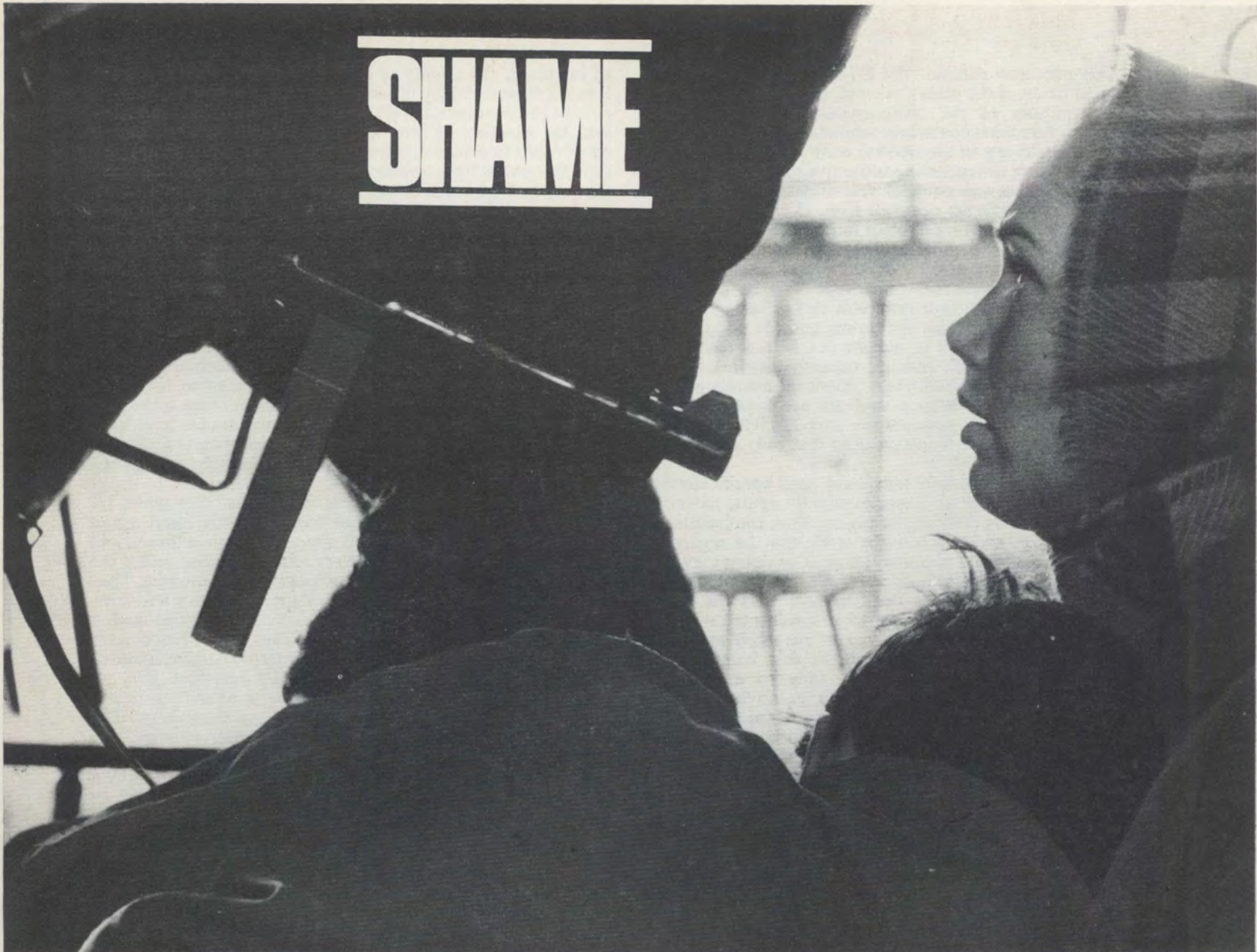
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It's odd to turn back to the book, *Hitchcock*, after seeing *The Bride Wore Black*, and to read what Truffaut sits through without protest. Some of what Hitchcock says must surely have struck him as unacceptable:

"I don't care about the subject-matter; I don't care about the acting . . . I feel it's tremendously satisfying for us to be able to use the cinematic art to achieve something of a mass emotion . . . My love of film is far more important to me than any considerations of morality . . ."

On the evidence, these are not the criteria that guide Truffaut behind the camera. Whatever he says, his films do not betray the influence of Hitchcock so much as his own originality. And though it seems foolhardy to attack the master by praising the pupil, what else can one do? If I lose my leg I lose Rosie.

Hitchcock, by François Truffaut and Helen Scott (Secker and Warburg, 105s.).



SHAME

Jan Dawson

TWO IMAGES AFFECT the actress Elisabeth Vogler in the 'hopeless dream of being not seeming' into which she retreats in *Persona*. The first is a moving image, seen on a television set whose volume has been turned off: that of a Buddhist monk incinerating himself in Vietnam. The second is a photograph of a child from the Warsaw ghetto, meekly surrendering—like the older Jews around him—to the captors who will lead him off to a concentration camp. Both images are of a reality so starkly unambiguous that it needs no artistic manipulation, no suspension of disbelief to inspire in the actress a mixture of pity and terror; a reality beside which the artificially induced catharsis of *Electra*—in which Elisabeth is performing when she first abandons language—dwindles into insignificance; beside which the lesser reality of family and feelings becomes an irrelevance.

Elisabeth tears up the photo of her own child, while carefully preserving that of the child from Warsaw; perhaps precisely because the picture of her own child is for her *only* a photo, an arbitrarily snapped moment in a life of which her mind can recall other moments, other expressions; whereas the picture of the Warsaw child (containing all she will ever know of him) becomes for her not so much a representation as the iconographic incarnation of his existence. But the paradox, which Elisabeth fails to perceive, is that because it isolates the child's tragedy from the confusing fog of events by which it was in fact surrounded, the photograph is as much

an artifice as Sophocles' constructions. It is different not in kind but in degree, still only a reflection of reality.

This idea—of two seemingly different types of image—was already prefigured in *Persona's* much discussed 'credit sequence', where simple images designed to elicit an elementary, non-verbal response—an early film cartoon, a spider, a nail being driven through a hand—gave way to more artistically complex and equivocal ones, culminating in the giant face (possibly his mother's) which the child tried to touch on the screen but which blurred each time he approached it. Here Bergman seemed to be directly relating the impossibility of discovering or revealing a lucid or unambiguous image (Elisabeth Vogler's quest is, like his own, both that of the artist and of the seeker after truth) to the development of artistic sophistication. The credits montage is in effect a condensed history of the cinema: the stationary cartoon gives way to the primitive animated cartoon, which in turn gives way to the unsophisticated silent film (a ghost story), and none of these seem from our temporal vantage point to require any interpretation. But the larger screen towards which the child stretches his hands cannot yet be seen in focus; the face projected on it may be that of either Alma or Elisabeth, or possibly of both.

The suggestion is twofold: first, that the present is always elusive, and that it is therefore easier to respond 'correctly' to distant atrocities than to any physically present situation

(and this may also explain why Elisabeth keeps one photograph and destroys the other). Second, that the more sophisticated techniques of the contemporary cinéaste (and the spectator in *Persona* is constantly reminded that he is watching a film) are irrelevant to the harsher realities of contemporary existence, capable of registering subjective states but powerless to reflect or affect the political acts of destruction in whose shadows most people act out their lives. Confronted with the burning Buddhist, the film director must defer to the TV news reporter, since his own finer language is superfluous to describe a reality that already exists beyond language or art.

As Bergman has himself remarked: "To be completely frank, I experience art (not only film art) as insignificant in our time: art no longer has the power and the possibility to influence the development of our life . . . I think that people today can dispense with theatre, because they exist in the middle of a drama whose different phases incessantly produce local tragedies . . . Religion and art are kept alive as a conventional politeness towards the past . . . The artist lives exactly like every other living creature that only exists for its own sake."

Several of Bergman's later films have dealt specifically with the artist as a member of a species slightly apart, have considered the pain and difficulty of his creation, the hostility or incomprehension which greets the work that he regards as being at once futile and necessary; and in so doing they have laid bare the apparent selfishness of his treatment of those around him. While *Persona* dealt in part with the artist's withdrawal into impotent silence when confronted with that reality which lies beyond art, *Hour of the Wolf* seemed to mark a return to the view of the artist as a being at once privileged and damned, responsible only to and for his creation, an egotist whose egotism brings no happiness to himself and only a questionable relief to the suffering of others: a damned rather than a sacred monster, but damned rather by the torments the creative process involves than by any awareness of creation itself as a monstrous and irrelevant self-indulgence. In *Hour of the Wolf*, the subjective demons that torment the painter Johan Borg seem once again to replace the 'real', political demons of *Persona*.

But the external demons have apparently continued to haunt Ingmar Bergman: "For some time, since the first moment of recognition, I have wondered how I would have sustained the experience of a concentration camp, of being forced into such a damnable position. How noble would I have been?"* Significantly, the political question is framed in the most subjective way: not how can I act to prevent another Auschwitz (for the assumption of an evil that man can attempt to comprehend but never entirely to subdue has run through most of Bergman's films), but how would I have behaved in a situation where there is no longer a possible choice between creation and conformity but only between dignity and humiliation. In the interviews he has given recently, Bergman has seemed increasingly aware of politics as the contemporary moral arena, but has simultaneously expressed his own inability to make any kind of political commitment. In the interview published in *Cahiers du Cinéma* in August 1968, he declares that despite the anguish he feels in the face of what is happening in the world, he finds it impossible as an artist to take an ideological stand, and goes on to explain that this is compounded by the conviction—manifest in *Persona*—that there are certain types of experience for which no artistic expression can be found.

At this point, his argument is surprisingly similar to that used by Godard in *Far from Vietnam*; and just as Godard, from a statement about the impossibility of describing Vietnam in artistic terms, went on to complete *La Chinoise* and *Week-End*, so Bergman too has gone on to show the unshowable, to make a film about war and its brutalising effect both on those committed to it and on those who accept no responsibility for it. In *Shame*, the themes of his earlier films survive: the island retreat, the isolated couple, the immunity of the artist, the journey that leads to self-discovery, the inadequacy

of language, the cruelty of a moral order for which no one accepts responsibility, the irrelevance of art to politics or of culture to contemporary life. But each of these themes, drawn into the question of how war affects those who make it or merely seek to escape it, takes on a new and harsher resonance, until the earlier films appear almost as tiny signposts pointing the way to Bergman's *Week-End—The Shame*.

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The narrative line is extremely simple. Eva and Jan Rosenberg, a childless couple, both violinists, have spent the four years since war was declared and their orchestra disbanded in a tiny cottage on a small island, making occasional trips to the mainland to sell the fruit they grow in their greenhouse. They have no views about the war, are unclear as to who is fighting whom and are unable to follow its fluctuations since their radio seldom works. While delivering some berries to the mayor Jacobi, they see a number of military transports passing by, learn that most of their acquaintances have been called up (Jan is exempt because of a weak heart) and learn from a fisherman neighbour, Filip, that the radio has warned of imminent invasion.

During an air-raid, an enemy parachutist dies when his parachute catches in one of their trees; they are interrogated by enemy soldiers, then made to appear briefly in a 'liberation' television interview. Other soldiers rout the enemy before the couple are harmed and they are advised to leave the area. They attempt to flee to the other side of the island but find their route blocked by burning houses, civilian corpses and a bridge piled high with military dead. They return home again and next day are rounded up and interrogated, accused of collaborating with the enemy over the TV interview. They are freed by Jacobi—now heading some kind of military secret police—and an armistice is declared on the island. The couple's relationship deteriorates and Jacobi, who showers gifts upon them, begins an affair with Eva. Jan discovers this and is instrumental in having Jacobi sentenced to death by a local resistance group headed by Filip, who forces Jan to perform the execution, then orders his men to burn down the Rosenbergs' cottage.

On their ruined estate, the couple find a young deserter, who tells them of a fishing boat that will be leaving the island next morning. Despite Eva's protestations, Jan shoots the boy and the couple proceed to the boat, captained by Filip, and buy their places with money Jan stole from Jacobi. The boat puts out to sea . . . food and water run out . . . there is no land in sight . . . Filip lowers himself hopelessly over the side . . . the boat becomes marooned on an island of corpses floating face down in mid-ocean . . . the journey continues . . .

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As in *Persona*, the credits provide some kind of key to what is to follow, only this time the sequence is not visual but aural. While the names of the technicians appear on the screen, sporadic bursts of gunfire punctuate what sound like transmissions from a short-wave radio-set, news items delivered in a babble of partly intelligible languages, whose immediate effect is to place the spectator in the same position as the film's central protagonists, to force upon him a physical awareness of the impossibility of choosing or taking sides. For even with a radio that works, truth is a question of the station you listen to. Evil is always on another waveband, and anyway, if you could listen to all channels and understand all languages, how could you analyse and rationally assess what you hear when it is forever being interrupted by explosions in your own vicinity? Even before the film has started, we are forced like Jan and Eva to dismiss the news of the world as being beyond our comprehension, relieved when the film passes from the political to the personal, from the 'difficult' credits to the seemingly easier, more familiar terrain of the opening sequence—the intimate tensions and dissatisfactions of a married couple who have sought to avoid the difficulties of their times by withdrawing to an island cottage.

For though we do not yet realise it, the theme of the journey, which will dominate the film's *form*, has already been introduced. Even in their sedentary retreat, the couple are already

*Interview in *Films and Filming*, February 1969.

in mid-flight from a reality that will slowly prove to be ubiquitous, but which—though their house burns, their friends die and their faltering love turns to hate as a consequence of it—they will never understand as having anything to do with them. The purely negative form that their travelling takes reflects their inability to accept or confront their present situation, as of course does their physical unpreparedness for the journey (their car won't start, they have no provisions).

And their attempts to escape in space are mirrored again in their attempts to escape in time. The few moments of pleasure that they experience either separately or within their fraught relationship are invariably stolen from some other temporal dimension than the present. *The Shame* opens with Jan describing to Eva a dream of the future that showed them both back together in the orchestra playing—music from the past—the slow movement of the Fourth Brandenburg. When they are overpaid for some fruit, they decide to treat themselves to a bottle of old wine which—in one of the film's most disquieting scenes—they buy from Fredrik, an antique dealer who has just been mobilised. His store is shuttered, and as Fredrik lovingly fingers the 18th-century Dresden musical box that is his most prized possession, the camera travels round his store, picking out single objects from different ages, while the sheer impossibility of relating these articles to the present situation communicates itself not just to the spectator but to the characters themselves. Mouthing optimistic platitudes about the war's outcome, Jan and Eva make an embarrassed exit, leaving the perplexed Fredrik, who unlike Jan is determined to 'show willing' in the service of his country, alone amid his suddenly irrelevant treasures.

Later, when they have drunk the wine, there is a revived tenderness between the couple. And perhaps because their exhilaration has no place in the present, Jan and Eva immediately begin to make future plans: she will learn Italian, they will practise their instruments together; yet Jan resists Eva's desire for pregnancy, perhaps illustrating that the future for which they plan is an idle dream, and reinforcing another of the film's underlying themes—that children, both those who are killed and those who will never be born, are the war's first innocent victims. Even in the hopelessness of the final situation, adrift in mid-ocean in the tiny boat, Eva again escapes the present into a dream of motherhood whose description closes the film.

If *Shame's* structure emphasises the futile escapism of the two main characters, this is further underscored by the fact that Jan and Eva are both artists, but artists whose work is shown—more harshly than in any of Bergman's films—as having no possible relation to the world around them. Their art provides them with nothing more than a temperamental alibi, an excuse for withdrawal, yet in so far as they no longer play and their fragile instruments are reduced to the level of mere objects, it further serves to underline the self-centred materialism that emerges as one of their most conspicuous characteristics. For instead of using the artist's isolation, as he does in his other works, to stress the differences that separate him from his fellow men, Bergman here presents it as a microcosmic embodiment of the moral afflictions of all humanity. The privileged position which the artist seeks to occupy loses all possible justification in conditions where his art can no longer be exercised, in the political arena already delineated in *Persona* as being beyond art. In such conditions, the artist's withdrawal from moral responsibility, far from differentiating him from his fellow men, becomes a metaphor for all human duplicity and self-deception; so that the external forces which here invade his island seclusion, though beyond his control, are nonetheless perceived as logical extensions of his refusal to tune his radio in on the world, his inability to respond with anything more active than horrified compassion to the body of the dead child that lies across his path.

The powerlessness of art to affect real events, already suggested visually in the scene in the antique store, is further echoed in the several intimations of Jan's sterility, echoed further still in his total inability to cope with mechanical objects: neither his radio, his car nor his telephone works, and his attempts to repair them are generally abortive (though Bergman does descend to one over-pat piece of sexual symbol-

ism by having it be the cuckold Jacob who gives the couple a properly functioning radio).

Similarly, Bergman demonstrates the human inadequacies of the artist when stripped of the protective clothing of his art by creating in Jan and Eva two of his least sympathetic characters to date. Jan is perpetually snivelling about his health, his wisdom tooth and his heart, complaining (how irrelevant are the artist's sufferings!) that the soldiers have beaten him, although he is unharmed and in the same room lie a journalist who has had his shoulder dislocated, a man whose legs have been broken, a corpse already beginning to stiffen and—most sinister of all—a bucket full of blood. Despite her sudden fits of irritation, Eva with her maternal dreams and little spurts of practical initiative is superficially the more likeable. And yet the very notion of likeability seems oddly out of place when applied to a couple whose squabbles and humiliations are as often treated farcically as tragically. (Jan's unsuccessful attempt to shoot the chickens he lacks the courage to strangle, like the shots of the pair tramping with their wheelbarrow through the defoliated forest, has a strangely Beckett-like flavour.)

Clearly what interests Bergman about the peregrinations of this supremely mediocre couple is the indiscernible point at which ignorance stops and complicity begins, the point at which they either realise that they are naked or begin to collaborate with the serpent. And in this respect, it is hard to determine which of the pair is the first to fall. For the idea of the impossibility of taking sides that operates on the political level applies equally on the personal one. Just as Bergman continually forced the spectator to revise his first impression of the relative strength and sympathy of Alma and Elisabeth in *Persona* and of Johan and Alma in *Hour of the Wolf*, so the sequence of events here compels us to modify our initial perception of Jan's selfishness as balanced by Eva's generosity. Though Eva's first impulses are invariably humanitarian (like trying to help the parachutist whom Jan is scared to approach) they are never reasoned. Jan's shooting of Jacob appears to be the first real act of betrayal in the film, because the camera dwells on it; yet it derives quite logically from Eva's adultery which takes place off the screen and which is another of her unreasoned impulses. As she tells Jacob, "I'm scared when I think about it, so I never think about it."

Of the two, Jan is the more obviously brutalised by the

"THE SHAME": LIV ULLMANN AS EVA.



brutalities around him; yet despite the growing horror he inspires in her, Eva stays with him even after she has ceased to love him, even after he has shot Jacobi, even after he has murdered the innocent deserter for his pair of boots. As Jan's atrocities escalate and he retreats into an increasingly animal state, Eva's horrified stares and hysterical screams seem superficially to mark her out as the moral half of Jan's persona; yet in effect her compassion is as useless as his suffering and her complicity is as great as his. She accepts being tied to Jan as one more aspect of the evil she can neither comprehend nor resist. Postponing leaving him until 'all this is over', she sadly falls into step with the husband who has fallen into step with the cruelty of the times.

* * *

Despite the psychological realism with which the couple are sketched, the extreme formalism of Bergman's direction transcends the plausibility of the film's surfaces. And though death no longer wears a cowl, the result is no less clearly a morality play than *The Seventh Seal*. A telephone ringing when no one is calling; a church bell tolling on a Friday; an endless line of transports rattling along the road in front of the cottage: all these, while functioning on a realistic level, serve also—as strikingly as the omens in any classical tragedy—to portend the greater disasters to follow. And despite the surprising number of awkwardly comic moments, the resemblance to classical drama does not stop there. The soldiers on both sides, the civilian corpses or the chain of floating bodies distinguishable only by the numbers on their knapsacks, are treated as impersonally as a chorus, while in relentless close-ups Bergman concentrates on the changes that war wreaks on a tiny circle of people. (Jacobi and Filip—as transformed by the war as Jan and Eva—crop up with more than realistic frequency.) Occasionally, he pulls his camera back to reveal Jan and Eva as tiny, insignificant points in a vast landscape

whose metamorphosis from pastoral setting to expressionist graveyard closely mirrors the changes in the characters themselves. And on two occasions, in Fredrik's store and in the drifting boat, Bergman's use of rapid dissolves in place of the longer takes that establish the film's rhythm make us suddenly conscious of its existence as a film. The first time, it is to demonstrate the misplaced nature of works of art in times of violence; the second time to caution us against admiring the beauty of his demonstration and to underline the warning against viewing war aesthetically that we can read in Eva's dream.

For Bergman's use of the dream motif is a further evidence of the film's formalism. The dream that Jan describes in the opening dialogue joins with the dream that Eva describes at the end to provide *Shame* with an artistic framework. And at a midway point in the film, when the couple are being interrogated at the prison camp, Eva remarks: "At times, everything is like a dream. But it's not my dream, it's somebody else's . . . What happens when that person wakes up and feels ashamed?"

Eva, well-meaning, uninformed and uncommitted, can feel little shame for the nightmare in which she participates. She stands back from her life and accepts no responsibility for what she regards as the concern of someone else's conscience. She stands back from it as we, spectators, may stand back from Bergman's film, and then retreats into another dream—this time her own—but which she still does not understand. In this dream, she is walking with the child she has always longed for down a very pretty street, with white houses on one side and a stream with roses growing near it on the other; a plane flies over and sets fire to the roses. "It was beautiful . . . it was awful because it was so beautiful . . . I sat there watching the roses burn . . . And the whole time I knew I ought to remember something, something that someone had said, though I'd forgotten what."

THE LAST SEQUENCE OF "THE SHAME": MAX VON SYDOW AS JAN.



FILM REVIEWS

OH! WHAT A LOVELY WAR

OH! WHAT A LOVELY WAR (Paramount) began its extraordinary life as a modest, beautifully executed Home Service radio feature called *The Long, Long Trail*, and sub-titled 'Soldiers' Songs of the First World War', that was broadcast at Christmas 1961. The producer-deviser Charles Chilton restricted himself in his hour-length treatment to the army on the Western Front. With two narrators (one to present the official history line, the other to speak for, and mostly in the words of, the man in the trenches), the programme traced the course of the war from the jingoism of summer 1914 and the ebullient 'Over by Christmas' atmosphere to the final offensive in 1918 that followed the four years of deadly, deadening military stalemate.

The 1963 musical *Oh! What a Lovely War*, that signalled Joan Littlewood's return to the Theatre Royal, Stratford East and soon to the West End, was evolved by the Theatre Workshop company in collaboration with Charles Chilton and the Canadian Marxist playwright Ted Allen. Restricting themselves to the same musical repertoire and theatre of combat, they produced a left-wing Brechtian entertainment, in which the war was presented by a pierrot company, the Merry Roosters, who played all the parts and sang all the songs, adding the odd steel helmet or Sam Browne belt to their traditional smocks.

The Littlewood musical was shortly followed by BBC-2's first exercise in cultural overkill, the Great War TV series which in twenty-six programmes covered every single front and facet of the war with every available piece of newsreel material, as well as by Joseph Losey's small-scale *King and Country* which also utilised contemporary photographs. Chilton himself did a TV version of his radio programme which drew heavily on the Great War poets and the Imperial War Museum's picture files.

That the Great War was a social, cultural and political watershed and a tragic experience with which we have still to come to terms, has never been in dispute. What the makers of the *Oh! What a Lovely War* film were faced with was the prospect that all the resources for dealing with it had



RALPH RICHARDSON AND JOHN GIELGUD IN "OH! WHAT A LOVELY WAR".

already been exhausted. Every reminiscence seemed to have been tapped, all the newsreels exposed, the archives ransacked, the paths of glory and the long, long trail trodden flat.

Seen in this light, one might regard Richard Attenborough's first directorial assignment as little short of a triumph, and one that reflects credit on everyone concerned. Operating on the same material and premises as the original radio programme, Attenborough and his script-writer Len Deighton (uncredited for some undeterminable contractual reason) have re-thought the structure in cinematic terms. Their central image of the Brighton pier is an extension of the Merry Roosters device; now the ingenuous holiday-making British public is attracted to the pier by a marching Guards' band playing 'Oh! What a Lovely War' and 'sign on' at the turnstile with the proprietors, Kitchener and French. The initial military encounter is played out by a marionette sideshow to the tune 'Belgium put the Kibosh on the Kaiser', which grinds to a murderous halt, and civilians become soldiers by trying their skill in a shooting gallery. Next comes jingoistic fervour exploited by a music-hall show in which members of the symbolic Smith family are drawn into volunteering for the colours as a result of the sexy exhortations of Maggie Smith regaling a patriotic audience with the recruiting song 'I'll Make a Man of You'. A startling moment here sees Colin Farrell as one of the Smith boys catching a glimpse of the real face of the grotesque siren who's lured him over the footlights; in the wings he's shouted into line by a sergeant and whisked off to Belgium.

With impressive dexterity, the film shifts between different types of stylisation. The pier stands for the home front, the high command, the detached world of political decision. Beneath it, the generals gather and politicians confer against a luminous white background; upon its main, slowly deteriorating, level, soldiers bid their families farewell, pacifist meetings gather, munition workers chat; above it, on top of a helter-skelter, Haig and the

general staff issue their battle orders. The front-line is situated on the Sussex Downs and no attempt is made to disguise the fact; we are never shown any face-to-face combat and indeed the only time the German troops appear is at the 'unofficial armistice' of Christmas 1914 when the two sides meet in No Man's Land.

What we sense in the film—more clearly than in the radio version or the calculatedly didactic left-wing stage version—is a national meditation, almost in the religious sense, upon the experience of the Great War. There is no rancour and no easy scapegoats. The Littlewood scenes involving the machinations of munition manufacturers have been dropped, and a decent regard for the losses suffered by the 'officer-class' (to which there was but a single reference in the play) introduced. The presence of what seems to be the British acting profession in its entirety, with the larger roles going to the lesser known players, strikes one less as a series of self-conscious guest performances than as a participation in a solemn, though far from humourless, act.

The connecting link between the various levels is made in two ways. First, every single transition is achieved by some verbal or visual association between abutting scenes. Secondly, Joe Melia plays a protean role that resembles Victor Spinetti's pierrot leader on the stage and, even more directly, Anton Walbrook's *meneur de jeu* in Ophüls' *La Ronde*. We first see him as a photographer taking a group portrait of the 1914 European aristocracy (Archduke Ferdinand slowly collapses as the flashpan explodes), and later as the man who lights the World War One sign on the pier, a company sergeant-major, a Salvation Army bandleader and so on. Given the complexity of this technique it is hardly surprising that from time to time certain cuts seem glib or forced. Yet the faults strike one less as lapses of taste than errors of judgment. One notable miscalculation, however, that has nothing to do either with the cutting or Melia's intermediary role, is the attribution of Rupert Brooke's *The Soldier* to a private in the KOYL; on stage at this point the

soldier more appropriately reads from a satirical trench newspaper.

All but a couple of the original songs are retained, and in more or less the same order. One—"The Moon Shines Bright on Charlie Chaplin"—has been added; and to a sequence of great feeling that focuses, through a corporal played by Michael Bates, on the difference between the loneliness of home leave in Britain and the comradeship of local furlough in France. The most memorable stage scenes, particularly the pre-Passchendaele church service with its moving hymn parodies, come over as powerfully in the film. In one instance, by showing Haig's retinue as a crowd of prancing sycophants viewed by cynical Aussies singing 'They Were Only Playing Leapfrog', the movie goes one better than the Littlewood show even on its own terms.

Undoubtedly the picture stands or falls—in my opinion very much the former—with its final sequence. Here the surviving Smith soldier goes into battle on the eve of the Armistice. Following a red guidetape to the attack start-line, he finds himself alone in swirling smoke. A control sergeant (Melia making his last appearance) escorts him through a blockhouse which leads into the conference hall where busy politicians are signing peace documents. Silently he follows the red tape around the room and out the other side to emerge on the Sussex Downs and join his dead relatives, who are reclining on the grass beside the family's picnicking female survivors. The scene reminds one both of Ambrose Bierce's story *An Occurrence at Owl Creek Bridge* and Charles Wood's play *Dingo*. Then the touching Great War parody of Jerome Kern's 'They Wouldn't Believe Me' slowly rises on the soundtrack and the Smith boys dissolve into white crosses. As the camera pulls endlessly away into the sky, the four living Smiths weave their way between rows of crosses that fill the vast expanse of the wide screen. And we are left with a sense of wasted lives, a feeling of impenetrable sadness, of unassuageable grief.

PHILIP FRENCH

ISADORA

KAREL REISZ'S *Isadora* (Rank) is both about the Isadora Duncan of fact, and the rose-tinted Isadora of her own imagining. In September 1927, in the last few days of her life, she dictates her memoirs. She is staying at a hotel in Nice, and she has a balcony overlooking the sea. "I was born by the sea, and I have noticed that all the great events of my life have taken place by the sea . . . I was born under the star of Aphrodite." What she remembers, slanted by emotional perspective, is what we see for most of the film.

Melvyn Bragg's screenplay makes use of Sewell Stokes' *Isadora, an Intimate Portrait* and Isadora's own autobiography *My Life*, both published in the year after her death and both now reissued in paperback. Sewell Stokes, who appears in the film as Roger (John Fraser), only knew her for a short while, but his book has some interesting photographs, from which one can see that in her heyday Isadora was a formidable, long-necked beauty with proud, rather melancholy eyes. In 1927 (she was 49 then) she was "a stout woman with an uncovered

head of flaming red hair, whose pale features had been badly touched up with rouge." She was also demanding, self-absorbed, and exceptionally offensive to people to whom she took a dislike.

Necessary simplification in the screenplay has involved the suppression of some important figures in Isadora's life, D'Annunzio and Duse, for instance, and some important incidents, notably her divorce from the poet Sergei Essenin and his subsequent suicide. Briefly (I add dates): she earns enough money in burlesque in Chicago to come to London with her mother, sister and brother Raymond; her Greek dancing is a success in London society (1900); in Berlin she falls in love with Edward Gordon Craig (James Fox) and bears his child (1905). She is taken up by a millionaire (Jason Robards: 'Lohengrin' in her memoirs, identified here as Paris Singer of the sewing-machine family); he helps her found her school and she has a child by him (1910); both children are drowned when their cab topples from a bridge into the Seine (1913). In 1922 she goes to the Soviet Union where she founds a school and meets Essenin (Ivan Tchenko); returning to the States she is rejected by Boston society. The framing story ends with her death in a motor accident.

A synopsis such as this is always brutal, but especially so in the case of a film where everything depends on the way the thing is seen. The biography of *Isadora* is as Isadora herself remembers it. At the height of her success an audience leaps to its feet and roars its approval, just as on the occasion of her performance in Boston it boos and almost unanimously walks out. Paris Singer is 'mountainously rich'; on their arrival at his house in England they are greeted by a fanfare of trumpets. Much of what she remembers is white: her own white dancing-costume, and those of her pupils; the white doves flying in the roof of the white indoor swimming-pool, with blackamoor statues below the galleries and servants standing by with refreshments; Singer arriving in a white Rolls, laden with strawberries.

Elsewhere her memories are often pared down to the bare essentials: the funny and touching episode with her Russian teacher, for example; the grotesque affair with the unattractive M. Armand, her Frog Prince; the occasion on which she tries to comfort her mother (Bessie Love), distraught at her daughter's unwed pregnant state; most economical of all, perhaps, the sequence in which her first child is born. *Isadora* is a staggeringly beautiful film to look at, for a reason: Isadora herself saw her life as beautiful. She also saw it as tragic, which it undoubtedly was, and of an unreachable solitude. Intercut with the sequence in which she lies in Gordon Craig's arms are images of her executing a strange kind of dance, alone, flat on the floor: love-making, we conclude, had been an expression of her being, like dancing, and in the one as in the other she had always been alone.

The framing story, told with considerable ingenuity and involving a black leather angel in a red Bugatti, is perhaps less satisfactory, simply because Vanessa Redgrave's ruined old witch is too obviously an impersonation. And though there is plenty of energy in the scenes in which she returns to America with Essenin, the treatment here seems to me too aggressive, and moreover sighted from the 1960s. "Gun is American poem," shouts Essenin, loosing off at a press conference. Send them back to Russia, urges Gospel Billy, America's Go-getter for

Christ: "the people there don't have no souls." On the other hand, not enough is made of the simple fact—which explains a great deal about her—that Isadora was American, "a governess from Milwaukee prancing about the stage immodestly." Moreover, casting an English actress in the role, however well-suited she is in other respects, further obscures the point. But there is a pleasant identification of her and brother Raymond, as they trot barefoot through Mrs. Patrick Campbell's drawing-room, as the first drop-outs.

It is odd how Karel Reisz appears to be drawn to abnormal psychology. In *Morgan* one felt a tension between the waywardness and irrationality of the central figure and the precision and lucidity of the direction. With *Isadora* there is a similar impression. Driven to speculate about my slight feelings of discontent with the film—and I can't suppress them—I think the root of the trouble may lie somewhere here. Isadora was a cause: you were either stupidly for her or stupidly against her. But *Isadora* is too intelligently and in the last resort too coldly handled for any such simple alignment to take place.

JAMES PRICE

THE SECRET LIFE OF AN AMERICAN WIFE

IN THE EARLY FIFTIES when George Axelrod wrote *The Seven Year Itch* it was thought to be a pretty cheeky piece of work. It did, after all, hold out the lure of adultery. It dealt, humorously but openly, with sexual passion rather than love. It certainly wasn't moral condemnation which weighed down poor Tom Ewell's sloping shoulders at the idea of Marilyn Monroe's undies frosting in the ice-box. It seemed more like guilt. But Ewell had nothing to feel guilty about. Unlike the stage version, the film has no adultery in it.

Things have moved on since then. *The Secret Life of an American Wife* (Fox), Axelrod's second film as a director, is a satirical comedy and adultery takes place. In fact the central half-hour of the film is the place it unabashedly takes. Everybody, it seems, is the better for it. This is an unusual line to take about adultery and it's interesting to see how Axelrod has done it and why.

Anne Jackson plays Victoria Layton, 34 years old, worried about her fading looks, worried about turning into a 'Connecticut wife' while her smooth husband (Patrick O'Neal) commutes to New York to business lunches and the Bigtime. He's in PR and his biggest headache is a superstar sex-symbol (Walter Matthau) who is ageing even more rapidly than Mrs. Layton, and for whom, he off-handedly tells her, his sidekick occasionally procures 100-dollar call-girls. Victoria doesn't see Tom's job as a headache at all, nor indeed that of the girls. "Doing something every American woman wants to do and getting paid for it" seems like a good idea to her. The stage is set for a redefinition of the American Dream.

The anticipatory scenes are built up with great wit. Victoria checks through her secret list of past conquests every morning in bed before she wakes Tom up, right back to the college boy who told her that she was 'a rooty-tooty kid'. Now it's a week or two since Tom has made love to her, a delivery boy finds her nude in the kitchen and doesn't drop a grocery, and she, who once read 'all eight volumes of Proust—in French,' is reduced to the status of a

common slavey. 'Ah,' she sighs to an empty kitchen, 'le temps perdu, le temps perdu. . .'

She looks back fondly to her first meetings with Tom. 'My God, but he was good at lunch.' And indeed if she has to wake him every morning it's usually because he is still suffering from 'lunch' the day before, a euphemism for the alcoholic belting he gives himself to stay immune to the horrors of his job. Patrick O'Neal beautifully manages the daily miracle of staving off disintegration with a veneer of immaculacy, and makes you feel it's the supreme PR feat. And yet his client manages, too, to be both awful and affecting. Walter Matthau's lines are very funny, but his performance, with its slow, stunned turns of desperate boredom, and the mechanical worm of a smile which can still a rioting corridor, is a real gem.

The centrepiece of course is the 'seduction', though that doesn't seem the right word for it. Victoria presents herself as a call-girl; Matthau eventually rumbles her and tries to send her away; she reveals that it's physical reassurance she wants, but rejects any advances made out of pity; finally Matthau persuades her of her attractions, of his real regard for her. They make love. She is in hiding when Tom arrives independently to tell the Star what he can do with his job. She returns to the domestic fold proud of Tom, confident in herself, and apparently widely loved.

At several of these points we become aware that the tart flavour of the first half is disappearing. Though it's nice that the Star's sinuses give him hell and his belly sags, it somehow becomes a cute convention itself that he hasn't had any girls for months. And though it's agreeable for us to note that Victoria isn't half so bad-looking as she thinks she is, yet she isn't beautiful either, despite what the Star and her husband both tell her. And some of the bed-spun philosophy that the couple exchange—'I think it's you who doesn't love you' the Star gently tells her—won't bear too much weight. Is it because of this that the pace begins to falter during the long bedroom scene, or is it the other way round?

What's the reason for this small dissatisfaction? It may be because the film has taken a bigger bite of something than it realises, and that it can't get it down. It's not that Axelrod isn't capable, to extend this disagreeable metaphor, of chewing pretty well anything. But this is much more than simply 'the other side of the coin of *The Seven Year Itch*,' as he puts it. It is very clearly about America and about certain types of American myths and phobias. The sex-symbol is virile, wayward, omnipotent, worshipped. He's also not what he seems: he's really sweet-tempered, hypochondriac, and near-chaste. He embodies the fear of impotence and yet safely dispels it with Victoria; at the same time returning, like a good Sibyl, a satisfactory answer about her own sexuality. It's arguable that the Superstar is the figure at the centre of this film and not the erring wife. And if that's the case it does seem that Axelrod has let him too easily off the hook by the end.

Because in some ways lovable Walter Matthau is too nice. There's a sketch by Godard in *The Seven Deadly Sins* which has certain resemblances to *The Secret Life*. In it Eddie Constantine plays himself, the archetypal American movie star, car-borne, snap-brimmed, rock-jawed. He gives a lift to a would-be starlet who takes him home. His sin is idleness, a lassitude so great it cannot bring itself to produce speech, to tie

its laces, to eat a sandwich, or, when the moment comes, to get into bed with the girl. It's funny and sad, because Godard casually creates the image of a real god: arcane, beautiful, indestructible, and curses him with the sin of *accidie*—the sloth which finds all action futile because purposeless.

As a prophetic image of America, with which Godard seems at the time to be only half in love, it makes its chilling point. And maybe some such point was the conclusion Axelrod's serious premises were reaching towards. Walter Matthau's image is hugely powerful, hugely attractive, hugely virile, while the man is purposeless and lost. The reality which engages us is not the cosy, hunky, kiss-and-make-up comforter of kooky suburban wives, but the symbol of bemused power constantly misapplied. This is what is touching about Walter Matthau's Star, and it disappears when the power's applied, in bed.

The grouse deserves less space amongst so many other excellences. The film leaves us with happy memories, and to those who have objected that it's too talky, let it be said that so much is good talk they should be grateful and shut up. And the film is not without images which gives us Matthau's droopy-eyed smile, or Patrick O'Neal sprinting painfully through the rain to his car with a hand held over his breakfast cup, making sure the brandy in his coffee will last him till lunchtime.

GAVIN MILLAR

FUNNY GIRL

YES, OF COURSE Barbra Streisand is marvellous. Yes, certainly *Funny Girl* (Columbia) is a monument to her talents. Yes, it would be nothing without her. Or would it? In the first flush of delighted discovery we have mostly conspired to make it appear so. But it is much too facile to dismiss the film out of hand as no less and no more than a triumphant vehicle for its star, a respectable and no doubt respectful screen transcription of her first great stage success. For one thing, if we can stop being dazzled by Miss Streisand for a moment, it just does not come over quite that way. For another, William Wyler, if not exactly the most fashionable of directors at present, is yet by no means a negligible figure, and it seems likely that there will be something interesting about the way he handles the musical form if we bother to look for it.

And indeed there is. A lot of fuss has been made over this being Wyler's first musical, after some forty years directing. In the circumstances, one might have expected it to be rather like *Ben Hur*: pale and impersonal, with the memorable highlights—chariot-races there, musical numbers here—farmed out to experts. All the more was this so in that the dance director, Herbie Ross, has come in for quite a bit

"ISADORA": VANESSA REDGRAVE, JASON ROBARDS.



of publicity on his own account and went straight on from *Funny Girl* to make his own full directorial debut with *Goodbye, Mr. Chips*. The more unexpected, then, that *Funny Girl* comes over overwhelmingly as a Wyler film; so much so that one wonders exactly what Mr. Ross had to do with it apart from staging the three numbers which actually take place as part of formal stage shows within the film. These apart—and only one of them, the Ziegfeld Follies finale, is really elaborate—the film is played very straight, directed all the time against the musical grain.

Most of the numbers are slipped as unobtrusively as possible into the dramatic flow. 'People', for instance, is done very simply in the midst of a budding-relationship scene, with the parts of the song dispersed among dialogue so that it seems hardly more than a sort of sotto voce comment on what is happening. The new title song, proudly advertised on the posters, is polished off with a short run through one chorus. 'Don't Rain on My Parade' is more developed, in that it is the finale to the film's first half, but the development is dramatic rather than strictly musical. The



BARBRA STREISAND IN "FUNNY GIRL".

song falls into three sections, the first quickly over in the station where Fanny decides to go to her man, the second with Fanny in the train headed for New York, done in a beautiful helicopter shot coming down right into close-up, and the third, even more spectacularly, in a stunning helicopter shot which starts high above New York harbour and the Statue of Liberty, comes down into close-up of Fanny on the prow of a tug, heading out to sea, and then soars away again to leave her, a tiny point of colour against the grey sea, still singing triumphantly. It is a flourish, certainly, but only incidentally a musical flourish.

So what Wyler has achieved, surely quite deliberately, is a musical drama in which the music plays an important but subordinate role to the drama. And it works. The second half, which brings the heart-aches inevitable in any show business biography, is harder going than the first, but even there we are kept interested by the story as a story; and the ending, in which Fanny Brice and her husband decide, quietly and practically, to call it a day is at

least unexpectedly devoid either of melodrama or synthetic uplift. The first half is something else again. Here Barbra Streisand is given ample opportunity to play comedy, in which she excels. No doubt a couple of long stage runs in the role helped, but the performance is completely geared to the cinema in its timing and dynamics, and there Wyler's direction must have counted for a lot. So, Barbra Streisand is marvellous, and Wyler has helped her to be so. But he has also made a personal film, of quiet but very real distinction. *Funny Girl* is more than just a pretty face, or a funny one.

JOHN RUSSELL TAYLOR

COOGAN'S BLUFF and THE STALKING MOON

AS A DEVOTED STUDENT of the Western who believes that the genre not only did not die around 1950 but first became really interesting at that point, I have to admit that there have been times when I thought the form was on the way out. In 1966 for example, when the best Hollywood could deliver was *Southwest to Sonora*; then the following year there came *Hombre* and *El Dorado*, which emphasised the continuing vitality while at the same time functioning in that critical, terminal area in which the Western has been for twenty years. I think we must accept now that even at its best (perhaps especially when at its best) the Western will always appear to be on its last legs. But a genre that can produce within a couple of months two movies like Don Siegel's *Coogan's Bluff* (Rank) and Robert Mulligan's *The Stalking Moon* (Warner-Pathé) cannot be considered moribund.

Of the two *Coogan* is the more imperfect and the more interesting. Strictly speaking it isn't really a Western but an examination of the cowboy hero's role in present-day American society. The story-line is almost identical to Siegel's *Madigan*—a cop in New York loses his gun and his prisoner due to a momentary distraction and is forced to track a mentally disturbed quarry through the Manhattan underworld. In this case however the cop is a deputy sheriff from Arizona in town to extradite an offender for local trial. Coogan (Clint Eastwood) is a dangerous, enigmatic, almost anti-social loner in a tradition of Siegel protagonists and Western heroes, and is possibly a good deal more unpleasant than the film's star, director and writers seem to appreciate.

When we first meet him in his natural habitat, he's in relentless pursuit of a fugitive Indian; operating as usual against orders, he nonetheless gets, and gratuitously thumps, his man. In New York, Coogan is out of his element, yet by no means a Longfellow Deeds-type simpleton. He objects to his reception as a stereotyped ignorant Westerner, whom everyone addresses as Buffalo Bill, Cowboy or Tex (this one irks him especially), though his dress clearly invites this response. Moreover, he exploits in his relations with women his exotic associations and the almost fetishistic appeal of his stetson and pointed boots. Further, he quite consciously uses his special status, and its implied (not to say culturally validated) ethic to ride roughshod over his prisoner's constitutional rights. His antagonist, of course, is not the young criminal; this singularly unpleasant

youth's function is as a representative of the psychedelic, drop-out underground that the film takes lip-licking delight in holding up to ridicule. The real antagonist is the hard-pressed precinct cop Lieut. McElroy (Lee J. Cobb) who's trying to cope with the insoluble problems of New York crime, hemmed in by legislative red tape. Commenting on the unarticulated determination of the battered Coogan to continue after the escapee, McElroy with weary sarcasm sends up the classic Western line, "A man's gotta do what a man's gotta do."

The first half-hour of *Coogan's Bluff* holds to a steady line and there seems a real likelihood of Siegel working out the mutual criticism that the Coogan-McElroy relationship proposes. Thereafter, however, the film, though often sharply observed and never without its incidental felicities, declines into being a routine thriller. The overall effect of this—perhaps contrary to the makers' intentions, perhaps not—is the elevation of Coogan's primitive stance, not to mention a general loss of conviction. The obvious, most convincing ending would have been a defeated Coogan being despatched home empty-handed, his prisoner denied him by the intervention of the courts. The irony of this conclusion would be equally powerful from whichever end of the political spectrum one approached it. Instead, he gets his man, together with the grudging respect of McElroy and the devotion of a singularly unlikely psychiatric social worker.

One cannot help feeling that the essentially urban Robert Mulligan would have made a better job of *Coogan's Bluff* and possibly that Siegel, whose *Flaming Star* ranks with the best Westerns of the Sixties, might have improved on *The Stalking Moon*. In his first Western, and one of his few excursions outside the city, Mulligan has aimed at a pristine simplicity. Taken simply as a thriller, the film's plot suggests an earlier Gregory Peck movie, *Cape Fear*, transposed to the West. Where in *Cape Fear* Peck was a modern lawyer driven to violence to protect his family from a vicious killer, here he is a long service cavalry scout retiring from the army in Arizona to his remote mail order ranch in New Mexico. Reluctantly he takes with him a white woman (Eva Marie Saint), recently released from ten years of Indian captivity, and her half-breed son. In their wake, leaving a trail of corpses, comes the boy's father, an implacable Apache chief called Salvaje.

Until the very end we never catch more than the merest glimpse of this menacing figure; rather we sense him as an inimical force of nature in a way that recalls D. H. Lawrence's comment that "white men have probably never felt so bitter anywhere, as here in America, where the very landscape, in its very beauty, seems a bit devilish and grinning, opposed to us." Indeed, at the allegorical level, *The Stalking Moon* could almost be based on Lawrence's observations on the love-hate relationship between the Indian and the white man in his essay on Fenimore Cooper, for basically the picture is about the struggle between the pioneer and the Apache for the soul of the little half-Indian boy.

The danger that *The Stalking Moon* faces with its reduction of dialogue to a minimum is that too conscious an exploitation of understatement can become no statement at all; and unquestionably a film so simply conceived at this stage in the game is necessarily an extremely so-



CLINT EASTWOOD IN "COOGAN'S BLUFF".

phisticated work. Still, I feel that Mulligan's achievement is fairly considerable at all levels; not only in such remarkable sequences as the one at the desolate railroad depot where Peck buys tickets for the woman and her son and is then overcome by the immensity of their shared loneliness, but also in the final desperate battle where the advantages shift so rapidly between the combatants. If the mythic grandeur and poetic resonance that he seeks ultimately elude him, Mulligan at least consistently avoids the easy effects and empty rhetoric into which similar undertakings have so often been lured.

PHILIP FRENCH

WAR AND PEACE

I SUPPOSE THAT a desire to pay homage to the greatest Russian novel and a need to demonstrate the resources of the cinema were, in equal proportions, the motives behind Sergei Bondarchuk's *War and Peace* (London Continental). It has never been hard to understand why Tolstoy—that 'difficult aristocrat', in George Steiner's phrase—should have been taken to Lenin's bosom. His first gift to the new state was his belief in reason, aesthetically as well as thematically a belief which can be oversimplified. His second gift was one of scale—*War and Peace* was written not as a novel, but as an epic, with Homer in mind—and the magnitude of historical process has been a constant concern of the Soviet cinema. And perhaps it is not straining things too much to see a parallel between the Soviet artist today, cut off since 1945 from the storm-centres in world affairs, and the nineteenth-century novelist becalmed in an ocean of enlightenment and progress, the emancipation of the serfs complete, the Napoleonic frenzy far behind the horizon.

Making a film on this scale must be something like running British Railways,

and it would be wrong to expect anything personal in the treatment, in spite of Bondarchuk's role as actor (Pierre), principal director and co-scriptwriter. If ever there was a film made by a committee, this is it. Its text might be some dubious words which appeared in this magazine some time ago: "It is the scale on which vital matters are dealt with that distinguishes the deep humanity of the classics from mass-produced 'humanism'." Its steering wheel is locked towards the monumental. At the same time the plot complex of the original has been radically simplified to the romantic skeleton we have already seen in the King Vidor version (1955). Tolstoy's thoughts on war remain in an abbreviated form, but his concern for agrarian reform and his reflections on the nature of the state have gone. The character of Nicholas Rostov is practically non-existent, Platon the peasant-philosopher has been sentimentalised almost to a John Mills degree, Princess Mary is allowed only her (finely melancholy) eyes.

The film ends, as Vidor's version did, with the romantic uplift of Pierre and Natasha embracing. Tolstoy's epilogue, in which we see them as a middle-aged couple—she jealous and irritable, careless of her appearance, he subdued and tyrannised—is not alluded to. Basically, the treatment of the story is operatic, non-realistic; whereas one of Tolstoy's fundamental concerns was to try to break down the wall between fiction and fact. Most crucial of all, the irony and satire have been left out. The scenes in the theatre, for example, brilliantly edited as regards the predatory Kuragin and the overwhelmed Natasha, are quite without Tolstoy's detailed, mocking observation: "In the centre of the stage sat some girls in red bodices and white skirts. One very fat girl in a white silk dress sat apart on a low bench, to the back of which a piece of green cardboard was glued. They all sang something."

The real creative force of the film flows in its battle scenes. Borodino is executed on a scale not hitherto attempted by the

cinema, and for this reason alone the film ought to be seen. The visual inspiration seems to derive from Napoleonic and post-Napoleonic painters such as David, Delacroix and Jean-Antoine Gros; most of all, possibly, from Géricault. The *verismo* of the shot in which Pierre is rolled on by a horse, the predominantly sombre lighting, and the use of classical compositional devices, can for example be seen in Géricault's 'Wagon Load of Wounded' at the Fitzwilliam and Delacroix's 'Liberty Leading the People' in the Louvre. Bondarchuk's dynamic constructions within the wide screen—diagonal movements, balanced areas of light and shadow, the controlled use of masses in motion—are worlds apart from Vidor's predominantly two-dimensional treatment.

The question is why it all does not move one more than it does. The film makes use of all the resources of the cinema: wide screen (the print varies in quality), stereophonic sound (badly compromised by the dubbed English/American dialogue), colour, tints, monochrome, split screen, fades, filters, wipes, irises, superimpositions, tracks, cranes, helicopters, all with the intention of involving the audience in the spectacle. One *is* involved, undoubtedly. But is it actually right that we should be so? A calmer, remoter, more reticent treatment might have taken us closer to Tolstoy.

The film has the virtues, and the defects, of that Russian emotionalism which at times will boil over, resolving everything, giving movement to the static and life to the dead. The return of Nicholas Rostov to his family in Part I, a succession of subjective shots with figures flying towards him, is typical, and excellently handled. Natasha is a fey, Audrey Hepburn type of beauty, radiant or weeping or palpitating for most of her time on the screen. There is a fatal tendency to generalise. Nothing is really seen individually and soberly, as it is. Prince Andrei wanders through the forest, finding a tree he remembers from the past; but all the trees, like the skies and the lakes and the plains, are Platonic, shadows may be of that absolute world of the existence of which Pierre tries to persuade Andrei in one of the film's more reflective sequences. Though perhaps they should be interpreted more simply, as emotional counters to be pushed at the audience from time to time to remind them of the beauty of the Russian landscape, hence of the Russian soul.

Isolated impressions detach themselves from a generally blurred experience. Dolokhov falls to the ground after receiving Pierre's bullet, his mouth choked with snow. Water drips from innumerable fountains as Pierre is manoeuvred into his declaration for *la belle Hélène*. Andrei's wife dies in childbirth, and even his sobs are dubbed. Empty wineglasses, thrown ritually over the shoulder at a banquet, mysteriously vanish from the floor in the next shot: the film hasn't time for that degree of attention to detail. Male choruses behind the credits invite feelings of group solidarity. An aerial shot at the end of Part I, of hundreds of horsemen milling round in an endless, mindless, dionysiac circle. The Homeric wolf-hunt, with Natasha's dance in the peasant's hut. The masquers, with Natasha in greasepaint moustache, cards under her pillow, and a furious drive across the frozen snow. Bravura sequences edited with an operatic flair: Kuragin's attack on Natasha, the old Prince Nikolai Bolkonski's nightly searching for a new place to sleep. Dawn comes to Borodino with chords of music and



"SWEET CHARITY": CHITA RIVERA, SHIRLEY MACLAINE, PAULA KELLY.

charging cavalry. His regiment helplessly in reverse, Andrei walks up and down, the stubble brushing his boots. As he stands rooted to the ground by a fizzing cannon-shell, there is a dazzling shot of sky, trees, landscape: 'I love life!' Napoleon, 'who repudiated goodness and truth', wanders alone on the battlefield at the end of the day. The candelabra of a ballroom become the pussy-willow of the forest.

Yet for all the sound and fury there is very little significance. Is *War and Peace* merely to be read as the myth of Russia's rejection of Europe? There is a curious line in the commentary which describes the French-speaking aristocracy of St. Petersburg as the people who kept the country going during 1812. Perhaps they are still there; and perhaps they remember what Tolstoy was really writing about.

JAMES PRICE

SWEET CHARITY

RETURNING TO THE FOLD after a series of unhappy excursions since *Irma La Douce*, Shirley MacLaine has found a queen-sized role in *Sweet Charity* (Rank), and is splendidly funny and touching as the "extremely open, honest and stupid broad" who earns a dubious living as a taxi dancer in the Fandango Ballroom, meanwhile overflowing with love for everybody and everything and being abandoned short of the altar by a succession of men. The trouble is that she is also required to dance—and in Bob Fosse country at that.

Now, Shirley MacLaine can shake a leg with the best of them, and does so valiantly, but she is no Gene Kelly. Chita Rivera, on the other hand, is. So is Paula Kelly. And when the three of them get together on the rooftops for one of those prancing, yearning, Jerome Robbinsish numbers, 'There's Gotta Be Something Better Than This', there is no question who is the odd dancer out. It is no surprise, therefore, that choreographically speaking the most exhilarating moments in the film

are two numbers—'Hey, Big Spender' and the trio of eccentricities that make up 'Rich Man's Frug'—in which the star does not appear. Here, with his characteristically tight, neurotically precise and almost off-balance steps, where the dancers hug close together as though afraid to break the magic circuit, Bob Fosse is Bob Fosse as he is nowhere else in the film.

For, doubling as director, he pulls constantly against himself, undermining his own meticulous algebraics by inserting choppy efforts at *mise en scène* instead of choreographing his way out of difficulties. In the opening number, for instance, as Charity tears gleefully through the city singing 'New York is My Personal Property', the camera rudely punctuates each line by zooming in, dissolving out, and picking her up again against some new background. Subsequently the direction settles down to become much less queasy, but there is still a plethora of irritatingly unnecessary dissolves, zooms, frozen shots and pretty montages, usually illustrating the extremes of happiness or despair that Charity has already expressed, or *should* express in dance.

All of which may make it sound as though *Sweet Charity* doesn't work at all. Contrariwise, it does, often magnificently. Partly because Ralph Burns' rich orchestrations make the score seem much more ebullient and original than it is; partly because the electric dances, whether performed with vampiric intensity by Suzanne Charny (the soloist in 'Rich Man's Frug') or endearing gaucheness by Shirley MacLaine (notably her solo with collapsible top-hat and cane in 'If My Friends Could See Me Now'), bear the unmistakable Fosse imprint; but mostly because, for all his Lelouchian devotion to decorative bravura, Mr. Fosse is obviously very good with actors.

It is already remarkable enough that Chita Rivera and Paula Kelly, as Charity's hardboiled girl-friends, should manage to deliver the old backstage wisecracking routines ("Is it flirting when someone kisses your hand?"—"Depends where your hand is at the time") as though they were fresh minted. When the *jeune premier* also

turns out to be giving a brilliant comedy performance, then it is time to sit up and take notice; and John McMartin, who sustains one of the funniest scenes in the film when he is trapped with Charity in a lift, is admirable throughout as the shy claustrophobe who is her last and most hopeful love.

Lastly, of course, there is that Peter Pan with sexual urges, Charity herself. Healthily, joyously, irrepressibly vulgar, Shirley MacLaine's creation is irresistible, carrying the film over its stylistic flurries and only at the end falling into the kind of sentimental whimsy that dogged Giulietta Masina's performance in Fellini's original. It is perhaps symptomatic of the film's indecision, however, as to what it should be doing and with whom, that emotionally her part is allowed to build to two dance numbers, one for each lover. The first, performed solo in her movie idol's flat with active props in the top-hat and cane he presents her with, she manages very well; but 'I'm a Brass Band', celebrating her proposal of marriage from the claustrophobe, is a more ambitious affair with full dancing chorus, and it looks—to put it unkindly—like *West Side Story* on amateur night.

One hopes, in other words, that in his second film Bob Fosse will get a chance to create a musical with, by and for dancers. Meanwhile, *Sweet Charity* joins *Finian's Rainbow* and *Funny Girl* in proving that there is still musical life in the old Hollywood dog. Who, watching the electrifying contortions of a row of pleading, hissing, finger-snapping taxi-dancers for the superbly weary, sleazy erotica of 'Hey, Big Spender', could doubt it?

TOM MILNE

THE RUNAWAY

TWENTY YEARS AFTER neo-realism, marooned on our private islands by the age of technology, we are turning increasingly towards the East for inspiration. The Beatles and Mia Farrow hare off to India; aboriginal art finds its way into European museums; the films of Satyajit Ray are received with almost universal critical acclaim. Now another Indian director, Tapan Sinha, is about to be annexed. Not in the same class as Ray, of course. Charming, enchanting, unsophisticated; indeed, one might almost call him a primitive, pure and simple and unaffectedly lyrical... When British critics start hankering after India, one begins to understand why that country is finally exorcising the ghosts of the Viceroy's. India, needless to say, is not a land of eternal summers and enchanting Victorian mansions with fairytale gardens. And *The Runaway* (Contemporary), though about innocence, is very far from being innocent.

One of the most striking things about Sinha's film, for a non-Indian audience at least, is the difficulty one has in setting it in time. As with several of Ray's films, the story (from Tagore) seems to belong to no particular period. The central character, Tara, is a peasant boy with wanderlust and an innocent eye. When the fancy takes him, he simply leaves home and his long-suffering mother and sets off with his flute on an odyssey of adventure, first joining a troupe of strolling players, later hitching a lift on the luxury houseboat of a wealthy landowner, who takes him under his wing,

provides him with a tutor, and finally decides that he will make the perfect husband for Charu, his spoilt daughter. Tara's mother arrives, wide-eyed with wonder at the sheer size of the landowner's mansion; but too late, Tara is already on his way to join a fair.

Most of this is seen through Tara's eyes, and the picture is certainly beguiling. Tara looks at the world around him and is entranced: the strolling players lethargically wending their way by ox-cart across an endless plain; the landowner's palatial home, stuffed animals in the corridors, the sun casting long shadows through the interiors; the wide, sluggish river suddenly filled by a flotilla of boats with painted sails; the magnificent white stallion which leads Tara to the fair. Watching this slow, meandering film is rather like turning the pages of an old photograph album: here a landscape with figures, next a posed family group or children playing in a garden. Time stands still; or rather, as Tara sees it, the passing of time has no meaning.

It is here, though, that one senses an ambiguity in Sinha's approach, and the echoes of Ray (Tara's lessons with the tutor, which include Wordsworth; a group of pompous landowners discussing the influence of Walter Scott on a new Indian writer) only reinforce it. A Western audience can hardly fail to be beguiled by the sense of timelessness which suffuses the film, the evocation of a lost childhood, an innocence recollected in tranquillity. But one is never entirely sure if it is simply this that Sinha means to convey. How, for instance, is one to take the tutor's remark about Charu's friend ("married off at five, and a widow at seven")? It may not matter for us, but an Indian audience would surely want that question answered.

DAVID WILSON

THE NIGHT OF THE FOLLOWING DAY

THE NIGHT OF THE FOLLOWING DAY (Rank) is a distinct oddity. As a straight thriller, it's almost catastrophic—or rather, it only really begins to work as a thriller, with the ramifications of an intricate ransom collection plot, at the point when it seems furthest from its original intentions. One could simply say that Hubert Cornfield, a writer-director who began with a more standardised line in Hollywood adventure, has succumbed to the French flu of the 'significant' thriller (Lionel White original and all). Bits of this obviously unsatisfactory film, though, stick in the mind: irritant survivals, perhaps, from an original conception.

Basically, it's a familiar kidnap plot: the gang of four, of whom one (Richard Boone) will be revealed as a psychopath and one (Rita Moreno) as a drug addict; frayed nerves following a successful airport snatch; the ransom collection that goes wrong; and finale with corpses. But from the start, with the kidnap victim's arrival at Orly, her dreamy awakening on the plane to the smile of the over-bright hostess (Miss Moreno), and her encounter with her father's chauffeur (Marlon Brando) the atmosphere is one of hazy abstraction. The kidnap car turns and twists through misty landscapes, finally pulling up on an empty stretch of sandy beach. They go into a chilly seaside villa, boarded up for the winter, with

the furniture swathed in dust-sheets and old newspapers. The avuncular psychopath chats to the almost adult victim (Pamela Franklin) as though she were a child of eight.

The whole opening is genuinely dream-like, in that it is remote and unsettling without arousing much curiosity: it has a dream's quality of acceptance. At the end of the film, Cornfield finally reveals that it is all anyway a nightmare in the girl's mind—premonition, or hallucination, or simply a reaction to whatever movie they were screening on the plane. But his intention seems to have been to defuse most of the thriller's realistic suspense mechanisms, to produce a more disturbing atmosphere of looming apprehension. The setting is right for it: the sand dunes and windbreaks and endless beaches around Le Touquet. So, oddly, is the character of the least obtrusive of the gang: the hulking middle-aged man played by Jess Hahn, always chewing away at some half-eaten sandwich, and contriving to suggest without doing anything at all that he could be the most dangerous of the four.

But the film makes far too many obvious mistakes—the gendarme who keeps turning up in his car is merely comical; the kidnappers have to keep implausibly explaining bits of plot to each other; lurching shifts of mood in the performances are less than helpful. The ending is exceptionally uneasy, with Brando rampaging about the beach, a black avenger with a gun, and Richard Boone emerging with city hat and rolled umbrella from a torture session with the girl. Something went very wrong with the film; but one is left feeling that there was, at least, something there to go wrong.

PENELOPE HOUSTON

PRETTY POISON

NEARLY THREE YEARS ago Noel Black directed *Skaterdater*, a pretty little short about childhood innocence ended through the hero's first tentative encounter with sex in the shape of a ten-year-old bicyclist with braces on her teeth. The film showed enough talent to arouse interest in his first feature, *Pretty Poison* (Fox). The title and the presence of Anthony Perkins in the cast seemed to guarantee in advance that it was unlikely to be another charming fairy-tale, and this certainly proves to be the case. It would be easy to discuss *Pretty Poison* modishly and at length in relation to such issues as the sex war, the cult of violence and the confusions between reality and fantasy in modern society. But Noel Black's intentions are manifestly more modest. Perhaps, indeed, we are not really so far from the subject of his previous film. As the latter's hero was wooed from his preoccupation with the skater-board, so we see Anthony Perkins seduced by another youthful charmer. Only here he exchanges his rosy daydreams for a nightmare from which he cannot awaken.

Perkins gives an unusually restrained performance, whether as the reformed arsonist on probation, weaving a web of imaginary counter-espionage activity in which he is himself inevitably trapped, or in the later scenes as he gradually appreciates the truth about his companion and his own destined role as fall-guy. But it is Tuesday Weld who dominates the film as surely as she does her weaker partner, whom she ruthlessly uses both to satisfy her sexual urges

and to disembarass herself of unwanted parental control. Her Sue Ann Stepanek reminds one disturbingly of those off-putting lady insects who devour their mates in the course of copulation. The gradual transformation from seemingly innocent high school girl, apparently wholly hooked by Perkins' pose as the man from the C.I.A., into the cool killer and demanding sex machine of the later reels, is very convincing.

Noel Black directs his cynical little story with caustic wit, exceptional tautness and an almost total lack of pretension. The small Massachusetts community with its one sizeable industry (the chemical plant which Dennis sets out to sabotage), its high school and its juvenile life centred round the neighbourhood movie house, hot dog stands and local lovers' lane, is deftly and authentically painted in, and the characters' past backgrounds established with great economy. Indeed one is surprised to discover he has needed only 89 minutes to accomplish what some established directors might have taken much longer to do less well.



"PRETTY POISON"; TUESDAY WELD.

The more lightweight first half may be the more successful, with the couple's first assignation in the movie house and their early love scenes in which it is Sue Ann who quickly takes the initiative. But in the latter half Noel Black persuasively mingles black humour and sex with realistic murder, as in the shots of Sue Ann sitting astride her first victim, the dying night-watchman drowning in the river, to ensure a job well done. Similarly Sue Ann's brutal shooting of her mother becomes the more shocking in the familiar setting of their chintzy suburban home. These effects, however, are always used to develop character and plot, in particular to emphasise the obvious sexual stimulation Sue Ann derives from murder.

Pretty Poison is invariably pleasant to look at, particularly when Miss Weld is on screen, whether parading in Ruritanian uniform with her college drill team, all honey hair and suntanned thighs, or scolding her associate for failing to open the car boot for the readier disposal of an unwanted corpse. Altogether Noel Black has produced a highly entertaining thriller which also, and with the utmost modesty, presents the case history of just such a youthful couple as periodically monopolise so much of our more popular Sunday press.

JACK IBBERTSON



FIRES WERE STARTED

Daniel Millar

HUMPHREY JENNINGS' POSITION in film history is curiously analogous to that of Jean Vigo. Vigo died younger (29 as against 43) as well as earlier (1934, 1950), so he made fewer films—only four, compared with Jennings' eighteen—but the nominal respect and actual neglect are oddly parallel. Two of the greatest masterpieces in cinema, *L'Atalante* and *Fires Were Started*, are seldom seen except by students and in occasional revivals at the National Film Theatre. Yet both are intensely living films, capable of changing one's perception of cinematic possibilities as well as achievement.

It's true that odd scraps of *Fires Were Started* turn up in television compilations, reminiscences of 1940 and the Battle of Britain, along with other unmistakable clips from Jennings. And perhaps *L'Atalante*, with its unique un-Buñuelian blend of realism and surrealism, is almost inevitably more esoteric as well as exotic than *Fires Were Started*. While they complement each other, as valuably as unexpectedly, my hope here is to remind rather than resurrect, since *Fires Were Started* is not forgotten as a 'Classic Documentary' but it is surely ignored as an exemplar for feature film-makers. It is not essential for its claims, though not irrelevant either, that it was conceived initially and directly for the screen. William Sansom's *Fireman Flower* stories were an afterthought or at most a by-product since, despite his major acting role, not he but Maurice Richardson is credited as Story Consultant. But in this aspect *Fires Were Started* contrasts significantly with the novel- and play-inspired British films during the brief renaissance of about 1958 to 1963—the best of which,

Lindsay Anderson's *This Sporting Life*, was more than coincidentally based on the best literary original.

Yet it is more important, in advocating *Fires Were Started* as nostrum and even elixir, to emphasise the interrelated qualities of human response and of style, in both of which it immeasurably surpasses every later British film in the intervening quarter-century. To some people, including me, this will seem a saddeningly moderate claim, since the most admirable qualities of Jennings survive, if at all, only in occasional television documentaries. *Fires Were Started* is an isolated masterpiece, even within Jennings' own work; and whatever influence he had on British documentary during the 'Free Cinema' phase and on the earlier television documentaries of Denis Mitchell, among others, came primarily from the more 'poetic' side of his work.

Lindsay Anderson, in his generous tribute to Jennings, 'Only Connect' (SIGHT AND SOUND, April-June 1954), is interestingly uncertain in his preference as between *Fires Were Started* and *A Diary for Timothy*: "One's opinion as to which of them is Jennings' masterpiece is likely to vary according to which of them one has most recently seen." And finally, he seems to come down on the side of *A Diary for Timothy*, which is certainly the more experimental and indeed the more characteristic of the two. But at the time of Jennings' death, Gavin Lambert had commented: "Not the least striking quality of *Listen to Britain* is its glimpses of ordinary people . . . caught with such quick affection and precision, without a trace of patronage or caricature. This is an almost unique

achievement in the modern British cinema, and Jennings' ability to make contact with all kinds of people, to present them naturally, acutely observed, shows at its strongest in *Fires Were Started*, one of his most ambitious films, and his masterpiece."

* * *

It was the 'Romantic' aspect of Jennings' work which briefly prevailed as an influence and then inevitably petered out in the mournful idylls of factory and slag-heap, lonely beach and crowded fairground, rain-soaked street and deserted children's playground, which formed the hopeful New Wave of five or ten years ago and which now turn up to embarrass us on television. Yet 'Romanticism' is an important term for defining Jennings, though not the very best of Jennings.

The mesh of traditions which come together in him is complicated and only partly filmic. He can be placed in the humanist and pictorial tradition of Flaherty, by substituting 'War' for 'Natural Elements' in a skeletal dramatic paradigm of their themes. But he can also be seen in the social tradition of the GPO and Crown Film Units, which gave him training, support and colleagues. Related to this is the sociological, Leftish orientation of Mass Observation, for which he edited with Charles Madge *May the Twelfth: Mass Observation Day-Surveys* 1937 (Faber and Faber, 1937), a key task in the development of his techniques, as Eric Rhode points out (*Tower of Babel*, 1966, p. 73). In transcending these categories, Flaherty and Griersonian, he is the creator of a distinctive 'Jennings Style' which is in a complex sense Romantic—in its values, in its pictorial beauty, in its experimental techniques. But ultimately, at his finest, he surpasses the virtues and limitations of his own 'style' to become classical, as well as a classic.

The 'Jennings Style' has several distinctive qualities:

(a) Beautifully composed and filtered long shots—in these Jennings is as much an English John Ford as an English Flaherty.

(b) A sense of the literary tradition, especially Shakespeare, in defining the quality of England. He was fascinated by Blake's vision, mystical but also intensely aware of England. He laboured on a never completed book, *Pandemonium*, about the Industrial Revolution, and was preoccupied with the relationship between science and literature. (Presumably also, though a pupil of I. A. Richards, he knew the cultural theories of F. R. Leavis and *Scrutiny*, though a footnote reference to Q. D. Leavis in *May the Twelfth* is the only actual evidence for this.)

(c) A sophisticated patriotism and a desire (non-Marxist though Leftish) to unify national experience in terms of public symbol and personal definition in relation to it, rather than to concentrate on personal life in itself—so sexual experience is virtually excluded except in its most public manifestations, such as the institution of marriage, emphasising children, or the formality of dances, or the generalisation of popular song.

(d) Elaborate interest in technical experiment with the medium, particularly the relationship of visual and sound. Editing is a vital synthesising element, in terms of emotional and even geographical collocations rather than the analytic Intellectual Montage of Eisenstein.

This is the Jennings of *Listen to Britain* and, at a more ambitious if to me less successful level, of *A Diary for Timothy*: the bringing together of disparate, geographically and socially varied, war-conditioned and traditional, industrial and agricultural elements into a total statement which expressed Britain to itself and to the world. The style is Romantic in its 'poetic' qualities and in that it attempts not only to unite past and present but also, especially in *A Diary for Timothy*, to project into the future. (Though it may seem ironic in retrospect, the 1951 Festival of Britain, for which Jennings made *Family Portrait*, was essentially a future-orientated, not a reminiscent, occasion.) Romanticism hangs like a cloud over his own ending: he was reading Trelawney's *Last Days of Shelley and Byron* just before he was killed in Greece, according to Ian Dalrymple, the producer of *Fires Were Started* (*Humphrey Jennings: A Tribute*, B.F.I. 1951). He was already

quite mature, thirty-six, when *Fires Were Started* appeared in 1943. If he had lived he would now be a Grand Old Man in his early sixties—he was born in the same year, 1907, as Bresson.

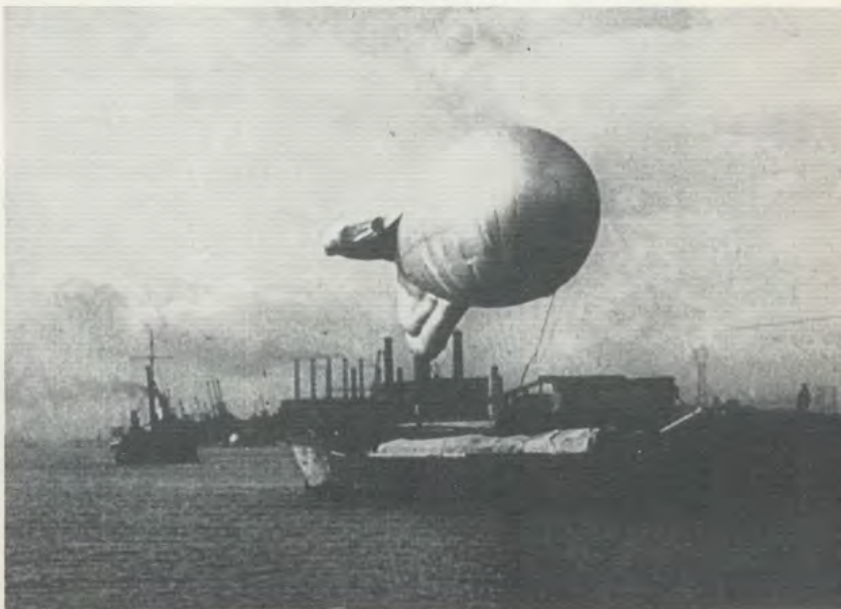
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Bresson's first film, *Les Anges du Péché*, came out in the same year as *Fires Were Started*: the beginning for Bresson, the culmination for Jennings. Yet there are moments even in *Mouchette*, such as Mouchette's breakfast visit to the grocer's shop, which seem to me analogous to such apparently dissimilar moments in *Fires Were Started* as the A.F.S. Commander's inspection at Control; not a question of direct influence, but of an affinity of spirit—though admittedly given a different edge by the near-subjectivity of the Bresson example and the near-objectivity of the Jennings instance. The resemblance is in the way of looking at people and the mystery of personalities, not taking up a pre-formed attitude but letting truth emerge, without comment, from the specific actions of these two brief sequences. This is not Romantic, but classical, art.

To suggest that the best of Jennings, like the more frequent best of Bresson, is not Romantic nor even realistic but classical must seem to depreciate much, perhaps most, of his work, though this is not the primary intention. But his Romantic side is undoubtedly imitable and even parodiable (as in *Beyond the Fringe*), despite its sophisticated consciousness and perhaps the element of deliberate irony—the threshold of which is a real and recurrent problem in his films, not excluding his best. *Fires Were Started* subsumes rather than simply negates the Romantic qualities already discussed; but it is notable even more for its purity of feeling, of style and of form: purity and nobility of feeling in relation to all the people shown, a flawless balance of objectivity and sympathy (a remarkable achievement for a highly intellectual Cambridge student of literature and art, maybe made possible by wartime conditions as well as his own genius); purity of style in the minimum of 'beautiful' shots and maximum of expressive shots, reconstructing in an actuality manner the events of a couple of years before (even in the ancient 16 mm. prints *Fires Were Started* remains stunningly beautiful to look at, since this kind of structural beauty does not depend greatly on sharp, fresh physical quality); purity of form in its unforced, classically dramatic unity—the whole action, as in *Listen to Britain*, develops within twenty-four hours.

Such qualities bring Jennings closer to Bresson than to any subsequent British director. Perhaps Anderson is the only one who has seriously tried to follow him in this line—tried and, I think, honourably failed in *Every Day Except Christmas*, the film of his nearest in feeling and intention to *Fires Were Started*. But the relationships are not secure enough, the images are not beautiful enough, the topic is not momentous enough for the comparison to be anything but damaging. *This Sporting Life* was at a stage beyond and yet more limited

BARRAGE BALLOON OVER THE THAMES.



than Jennings, concentrating on interpersonal and introspective conflicts. The qualities which interested Antonioni, and reputedly led him to offer the part of Corrado in *The Red Desert* to Richard Harris, are precisely those which are non-Jennings, psychological and almost purely personal, deriving largely from the Storey novel. Whereas Anderson was compelled to draw in and attempt to revitalise the familiar faces from a stereotyped pop culture, Jennings had the advantage of drawing his characters directly from reality and only his references, usually songs, from popular culture. I have already commented on *The White Bus* in the Autumn 1968 issue of *SIGHT AND SOUND*. *If*... owes more to the Vigo of *Zéro de Conduite* than to Jennings. Such concepts as 'England' or 'tradition' are embodied so differently in *If*... and in *Fires Were Started* that any underlying affinities of sensibility or values are by now largely obscured.

* * *

Jennings was able in this film to surpass not only his sole conscious semi-disciple but also every other British filmmaker (including his other 'Romantic' self) by concentrating on a limited area of Britain (London), a limited area of London (the dockside East End), a limited area of action (the Auxiliary Fire Service), a limited area of time (one day and night in Spring, 1941), even a limited consciousness, the advertising agent and potential novelist Barrett (William Sansom), whose experiences we largely though not exclusively share. *Fires Were Started*, now twenty-six years old, seems to me the highest achievement of British cinema; and Jennings is not only the greatest documentarist but also, counting Chaplin and Hitchcock as American, the greatest film-maker that this country has produced. It is against the yardstick of his work that the British films of 1958-63 and of the present need to be judged. But a more proper correlation is with the great 'non-actor' directors like Bresson, Eisenstein and, at his best, Rossellini. No American directors (apart from Flaherty) have, at least until the recent advent of the Underground, even entered in this area of Film as Art which is at the same time Film as Reality. *Fires Were Started* is Jennings' least characteristic as well as greatest film.

Not primarily realistic, though certainly authentic, it is essentially a blend of naturalism and classicism, so successful that it can be, and no doubt has been, seen as simply a highly efficient 'documentary' without any particular personal quality at all. This illusory impersonality functions as an apparently clear glass to display undistortedly the people of the A.F.S. and the nature of their task. It is only afterwards, when one comes to analyse the inclusions and exclusions, that one becomes fully aware of the strict principles of selection. Jennings puts in the relationships of the men in a unit; their work of preparation and fire-fighting; their leisure and rest periods; the communications work of the women on which the larger organisation depends; and the fact of death. He leaves out blood (except once, all the more effective for its restraint, a streak on a pretty telephonist's forehead, which she casually wipes away, concentrating on an urgent call); suffering; wounded and dead bodies, except a single brief shot of a one-legged man walking away on crutches through the rubble; fear, except in one shot of a runaway horse; the enemy, except impersonally as sounds; the tactile qualities of the job, except possibly in the extended clearing up of equipment after the fire. The fire is abstract and almost symbolic, a condition, a problem and a challenge, rather than a physical state—in this sense, though for different reasons, Jennings shares the firemen's own coolly analytical attitude. Their aim is to put it out; his aim is to depict the beauty of the fire and of their movements and responses.

This is not to imply an attitude of remote detachment. In fact, the ratio of close-ups to long shots is unusually high for Jennings. This is partly because he is depicting individual people in detail and depth; but also because he is following through a narrative line rather than relying primarily on editing. The editing of Stewart McAllister, a close collaborator in such earlier films as *Listen to Britain*, is actually impeccable; but this is not a film of montage in the sense that most of Jennings' films are. A recurrent method of linking

sequences is to dissolve or even cut from a long shot (ships in the dock, barrage balloons over the river, the long perspective of ravaged Trinidad Street) to a close-up of one of the men, bringing us sharply back from the larger scene.

Possibly the most effective instance, though its significance does not fully emerge till later, occurs while Barrett is playing the piano as the men await the call to a fire, just before the justly famous 'One Man Went to Mow' sequence. At this point shots of the men amusing themselves, listening to the piano and comically dancing to the music, are being intercut with shots of the ships and warehouses they hope to protect. From a 'typical' filter shot of the evening sky, Jennings abruptly dissolves to a close-up of 'Jacko' Jackson lighting a cigarette in the bunkhouse. It has earlier been established that he runs a small tobacconist shop, and he is the only one whom we have actually seen with his wife—when she said to him as he left, "Don't do nothing silly," he had answered, "I won't." He is the simplest and most vulnerable of all the men; and the dissolve tells us with heart-stabbing certainty, but no trace of overt comment, that he is the one who will die tonight.

Later, during a pause up on the burning roof, he again lights a cigarette, quite unconscious of the irony of this gesture in the midst of fire. His final isolation and his own immersion in fire complete the visual logic of the two earlier shots. The treatment of his death is beautifully stylised in a series of complicated superimpositions and ends with a Blakean shot of the sudden spurt of an oil fire on the South Bank. According to the recurrent method, this long shot is immediately followed by the close-up of the girl back at Control dabbing at her cut forehead. Neither a bit of shrapnel nor a blazing death must interrupt the essential work. Jennings re-emphasises the point by continuing to show the fire-fighting for several more minutes after this climax, including an astonishing shot of two more men crossing a burning, collapsing little bridge to safety, before returning to Sub-Officer Dykes (whom Jacko had died in helping to save) restlessly submitting to having his head bandaged by a nurse, and then to the final conquest of the fire.

This part of the film beautifully illustrates the non-realistic blend of naturalism and classicism. The firemen are played by real firemen; and we know perfectly well that Jennings would not have burned one of them alive in order to get a realistic shot. Yet men had died in fires during the Blitz and Jacko is their representative. Though the people in the film are virtually playing themselves, neither is the characterisation realistic. The personalities and their inter-actions are examined in detail; but the inevitable pettinesses and squabbles in a small group of highly disparate people are not allowed to emerge. The characters are rounded but not complete: they are intended to be at once heroic and ordinary, and anything that would conflict with this difficult conflation is rigorously excluded. The intention here could be taken as propagandist, but this is an irrelevant objection. The men are richly ordinary in their personal lives and heroic only in their function—they are brave because they perform brave actions. The names one would wish to evoke for comparison include not only Bresson but also Renoir, with his recurrent emphasis on comradeship and the human yet more-than-personal values of the shared task. As a film of the Second World War, *Fires Were Started* belongs with *Un Condamné à Mort s'est Echappé* and *Le Caporal Epingle*, not with the documentaries of its own time.

* * *

A dozen years separated Bresson from the events he was depicting; with Renoir, it is more like twenty years. It seems strange, and is certainly remarkable, that Jennings could have achieved a comparable distancing and abstraction of essentials within a mere two-year interval. A forthright and often perceptive contemporary review in *Documentary News Letter* (June 1943) provides an interesting clue to the relative time-scale within the War in its opening sentences: "Who would have thought that a film about the Blitz could seem timely and important now? It is the great achievement of *Fires Were Started* that you're just as interested and the film means just as much now as if it had been made and shown in the middle of the raids, and it will mean just as much in a few



"Fires Were Started": shots from the sequence of clearing-up after the fire—debris and hoses in the street, the arrival of the mobile canteen.

All stills for this article, including the group above, have been taken from the frame by Frank Holland of the National Film Archive.

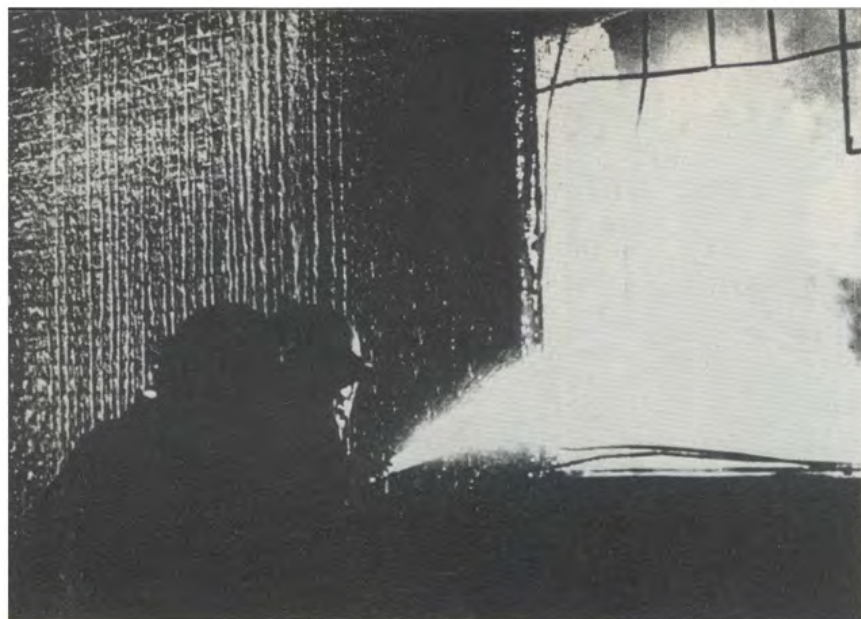
years' time when the war is over." The last remark, after a quarter-century, looks like an almost comical understatement—or ought to, if the film were as current and widely known as it should be. But it usefully illustrates that 'a few years' in wartime was a considerably longer span emotionally than a few years in peace—the half-decade separating Bresson's film from Renoir's is virtually insignificant. But the two-year gap separating Jennings from the Blitz must have been as essential to him as it was striking to that anonymous reviewer.

It enabled him to put together a personal statement, rooted firmly in realities of the recent past, which was symbolic and poetic (without quotation marks) in a way that baffled the same otherwise generously sympathetic reviewer, but which is clear enough in retrospect. For instance, he criticises the motif of the munitions ship, which Barrett and Johnny Daniels see being loaded early in the film, and which is finally intercut with scenes of Jacko's funeral. But, in a brief moment of elation between Barrett's discovery of Jacko's battered helmet and the shot of the one-legged man mentioned before, it had for Johnny been the justification and reward for the 'bad night' and his comments ("Not a scratch on her . . . a sight for sore eyes") are aesthetic rather than patriotic. This superb example of Jennings' brilliantly and consistently intelligent use of cliché leads us back to the other ships and boats in the film—not only those of the river firemen and the ones which carried the glinting, beautiful shapes of the barrage balloons (Jennings, of course, was notoriously a keen-eyed admirer of functional beauty), but to the Thames Barge with its evoca-

tions not only of Spenser and Shakespeare but of Eliot's *The Waste Land* and the popular song, 'Red Sails in the Sunset.'

The reviewer unconsciously supplies yet another overtone when he says: "From this film the A.F.S., with its loose semi-naval disciplinary set-up, seems (or rather seemed) an ideal way of organising an important service." The difference between the A.F.S. of 1941 and the N.F.S. of 1943 was analogous to the difference, for Conrad, between sail and steam. And the values of *Fires Were Started* are analogous to those of *The Shadow Line* and *Typhoon*. To see the munitions ship as a Conradian ship is at least as relevant as to see it as a Ministry of Information ship, and considerably more illuminating of Jennings' vision.

Similarly, though with a little more justification, the following reservation: "But Jennings must be held entirely to blame for the three or four occasions when, with somebody playing the piano or reading or reciting poetry (in his worst *Words for Battle* manner) he goes all arty for a moment, then after a nervous glance at the embarrassed audience, his courage fails him and pretending that he didn't mean it really he proceeds to take the mike out of himself." Jennings' frequent use of popular songs is invariably perfect: nowhere more so than in the 'One Man Went to Mow' sequence, with its informal theatricality (of which Renoir himself might have been proud), its understated final acceptance of Barrett as part of the group, and the subsequent desperate, almost surrealistic gaiety of 'Please Don't Talk About Me When I'm Gone,' as bombs fall outside and a picture drops from the wall.



But the handling of quotations and music is less sure. William Alwyn's incidental music is generally less than an asset. But for viewers living in the Godardian age of cinema, the music-swamped soundtracks of most Forties films present a problem of adjustment which is seldom easy, and presumably has to be written off to convention if it cannot be fully assimilated. The literary quotations are more personal to Jennings and therefore demand different treatment. The intention is quite clear, but the actuality is more problematic.

* * *

For instance, in between 'One Man Went to Mow' and 'Please Don't Talk About Me When I'm Gone,' Rumbold reads a famous purple passage from Sir Walter Raleigh, "O eloquent, just and mighty Death . . . *Hic Jacet.*" And the Sub-Officer comments grimly: "We'll set that to music . . . when we come back." Naturalistically this is convincing enough; fine writing in the Quiller-Couch sense might well appeal to a man of literary tastes who had not, like Jennings, been educated in the later Cambridge ethos of Richards, Leavis and Empson. But the multitudinous ironies of the exchange, though powerful, are too difficult to bring into clear focus. Obviously we are not meant to take Rumbold's reading straight and dismiss Dykes as a philistine. But equally obviously we are not intended to see Rumbold as a romantic escapist and Dykes as a down-to-earth realist, more profoundly aware in his Cockney wisdom of the facts of death than Sir Walter Raleigh. *D.N.L.* at least attempts an analytic



interpretation, however simplified (unlike Eric Rhode, who dismisses the question with an off-hand "These touches are crude"). But if *no* interpretation is entirely satisfactory, the complexity may well be a weakness rather than a super-subtlety. The rare combination in Jennings of a highly intellectual literary sensibility with extreme visual acuity had at times its price as well as its rich gifts.

The advantages emerge so indisputably in the fire-fighting scenes that there is no need to discuss them in detail, beyond a couple of examples. The battle between fire and water is a main motif, along with the teamwork of the men (and women); yet both fire and water generally appear in the monochrome of the film as dazzling white, differing only in form, the free play of the fire, the controlled line of the water (Jennings' debt to Blake is at least as much a matter of visual style as of ideas). Up to beyond the death of Jacko, the fire seems totally to consume the water without being itself affected. Then, just after the two men have crossed the burning bridge and begun to attack the fire from a new angle with a fresh hose, comes a striking shot of two turntable ladders, diagonal to the frame and each other, suggesting that the firefighters are now on top of the fire in a less precarious sense than on the burning roof. The next shot shows an area of fire, for the first time actually being quenched by water. After a cut-away to the injured Sub-Officer being bandaged, the men are working to a slower rhythm. A long shot shows water running down the wall of the warehouse in beautiful, natural patterns, reminiscent in reverse (down instead of up) of the previous free-moving patterns of fire. The fire is at last sated and yields up its formal identity to the water. But, since the film is naturalistic as well as classical, the story of the water cannot end here. Having done its work, it lies about in deep puddles, adding to the labour of disconnecting and rewinding the now pressureless hoses; while the men, having pumped in thousands of gallons, are themselves as thirsty as the fire was, and eager for a cup of tea from the mobile canteen. The imagery of fire and water is scarcely less complex here than in *Mouchette*, to cite again that unlikely parallel.

Perhaps another parallel is suggested by Jennings himself, in concluding a scathing attack on the British theatre of the mid-thirties: "For a short period at the end of the sixteenth century and at the beginning of the seventeenth several Englishmen used 'the theatre' as they found it, for their own purposes of poetry and analysis of behaviour—*connaissance*—we have no word for it—naturally. That these may still be constructed by Englishmen there seems just a possibility, but that they can or will use the theatre as a means is hardly possible. . . ." Jennings used 'the cinema' for his own "purposes of poetry and analysis—*connaissance*", and *Fires Were Started* is the only British film which looks and sounds as if it came from the land of Shakespeare.

* * *

To conclude, I suspect that *Fires Were Started* may have had a more personal meaning for Jennings than any of his other films. I am not particularly thinking of the possible Freudian overtones of the tumescent hoses, though for a man who had sent his wife and children to America for the duration of the war, the idea might have had a Blakean aptness. Rather of the comradeship, interdependence and shared work of a fire-fighting unit and a film-making *équipe*. Instead of pointing hoses, pointing cameras and booms. Instead of a mobile pump, the mobile generator. Instead of rolling up hoses, coiling up heavy cables.

This is, of course, mere speculation; but it relates to my own experience with the film. At one time I used to emerge from a showing of it feeling that the finest thing in the world was to be a member of the A.F.S. in 1941. Now I am more inclined to feel that the finest thing in the world (or at least in the English cinema) was to have been making a film about the A.F.S. in 1943.

*"The Theatre" in *The Arts Today* (Edited by Geoffrey Grigson) London, 1935: pp. 215-216. I am indebted to Professor Roger Sharrock for this reference.

FILM CLIPS

YES, OF COURSE, come right along—if you're really sure you want to meet an old blonde wreck." The voice at the other end of the 'phone was unmistakable: husky, with a teasing hollowness in the middle registers, and the odd, personal intonation which seemed to tinge even the most ordinary statements with ironic incredulity. Veronica Lake (who else?) was in London for the publication of her autobiography, and had been proving a somewhat elusive lady. But not, it seemed, just for the sake of being unapproachable: when I arrived I found her deep in conversation with a mild-mannered, middle-aged man who, it eventually transpired, nurtured beneath his conservative grey suit the heart of a frenzied fan and had waited ten hours in the foyer of Veronica Lake's hotel in the remote hope of glimpsing his idol. "Well," said Miss Lake when he had gone, "I guess people deserve some courtesy and attention for that. Though it amazes me that anyone still remembers. God knows why they should, when you think that in my whole film career I only did about three pictures

which were anything but lousy."

Miss Lake, it will be gathered, does not have any noticeable illusions about her days as a Hollywood goddess. "I guess it was partly my fault, and partly the studio's. I think I've got to be a pretty good actress by now. I've worked at it: I've played in stock companies, I've trained and disciplined myself, I've watched and analysed how the great actors do it. When I began I didn't know anything, but I always wanted to act, not just to be a star. I can't really blame Paramount for keeping me in the sort of nothing roles that had made me a star in the first place. I can't really blame myself. But even if I had seen exactly what I ought to do, I very much doubt if I could have persuaded anyone else to see things the same way. When I look back now I see 'Veronica Lake' as someone, or something, quite separate from me today—something that was invented by Hollywood and that ceased to exist when Hollywood had no further use for it."

But the woman behind the star by no means ceased to exist. Off-screen she is tiny (well, of course, as ideal co-star for Alan Ladd), voluble, completely without pretension. She dresses informally, according to her whim—when I met her she was wryly fascinated by the spectacle of herself in mini-skirt and intricately patterned bodystocking bought that afternoon one weak moment in the King's Road—and wears no make-up. "Here and now," she says cheerfully, "I look my age. But on stage or screen, properly made up, I look years younger, partly because I'm so small and slight. God, it's not so long since I was playing Peter Pan! But, you know, it's a problem. Like child stars who grow up and want to play their age, but can't because whatever made them unnaturally perfect children makes them look all wrong as grown-ups. Now I have to find a way of making a quick but graceful transition from Peter Pan to Grandma Moses."

In her whole screen career she looks back with any real sense of achievement only to *Sullivan's Travels* and *I Married a Witch*. Both Sturges and Clair she found extraordinarily gentle to work with. Especially Clair. "You know, his English was not bad, but he always found difficulty in expressing

himself, because he said he had to translate everything backwards and forwards in his mind first. The technicians and others could be quite merciless with him, because they thought he couldn't answer back. I got on very well with him, and at least I could remember enough schoolgirl French for us to talk easily together. Once I said to him: 'Why do you take so much from them all? Why don't you hit back and bawl them out?' And he said, 'Well Ronni, you know technicians are like actors: if you shout it only confuses them.' He must have had the patience of Job. But in the end he always got what he wanted, because he knew exactly what he wanted. His mind worked so neatly and precisely, it was beautiful to watch. I know his films aren't so fashionable now, but I think they are really built to last, while I'm not so sure about those of Renoir, who is, I suppose, the opposite, all instinct.



"I MARRIED A WITCH": VERONICA LAKE, FREDRIC MARCH.

A film like *The River* could take your breath away at the time, it was so beautiful. But I think it has already faded a bit, while the qualities Clair had are still all there, all working, firm as a rock."

Was it true that Clair did not originally want her in the film? "Yes, I don't think he had anyone else in mind, but he didn't have any reason to suppose I could do it. It was Preston who was sure that I could. You know who in fact began as producer on *I Married a Witch*? Preston Sturges. And then after three days he bowed out and let René do it entirely his own way. That was very Preston. He wanted René to get the chance to make the film, and he wanted me to have the chance to be in it, so he took the responsibility himself to bring these two things about, and then quietly bowed out when it was all set up. He was a marvellous person, and I loved him dearly. He had such a fantastic life, he used to tell us wild stories about his childhood around Isadora Duncan, his mother's affairs and the rest of it. It's a tragedy he didn't live to write more than a few notes for his autobiography. Not that he probably ever would have written it, he was too tied up with just living."

It is a wonder that Veronica Lake ever got round to writing her own life story, even in sympathetic collaboration. She says she's lazy, wants to work only as much as will

"SULLIVAN'S TRAVELS": VERONICA LAKE, JOEL MCCREA.



pay the bills, and spend the rest of the time just living. It may not be entirely true: dig a little deeper, and she is full of ideas for film scripts (not, mostly, vehicles for herself: there is one, for instance, called *The Chalk Dancers*, which concerns the reactions of an international congress of mediums when the daughter of one of them is raped and murdered), plays she would like to do, actors she would like to act with.

The clue is perhaps provided by something she said. The room where she was staying was scattered with photographs and drawings of the stars, and one, a drawing of Michel Simon, particularly fascinated her, especially the look in the eyes, which seemed to convey a desperate call for love and help, reminding her very much of John Barrymore in his last days. "Of course, everybody is lonely occasionally, but some are loners all their life. If you are, you have to live with it. These people, beautiful as they are" (pointing to portraits of Garbo and some other absentees) "have dropped out. I may end up looking like that" (pointing to Simon) "but I'll still be here. I'll never give up, never give in. They'll have to carry me away first."

FILM DISTRIBUTORS are mostly a colourless, anonymous breed to the public at large. But the public at large, in so far as it is at all inclined to read handouts, must surely make an exception in favour of Antony Balch. From his programme leaflets for the Times Cinema, Baker Street Station, which he is at the moment programming in his own inimitable fashion, you might conclude that he was mad (knowledgeably, beguilingly mad, let me hasten to add), but you would never suppose that some faceless, impersonal businessman figure was behind the venture. And you would be perfectly right. I don't doubt that Tony Balch is an excellent businessman, but clearly his approach to his trade is that as well as being profitable (yes, preferably as well, rather than instead) it must be fun for him, or what is the point?

Consequently, first of all he shows films that he likes and wants to show. But secondly, he wants to get people to see them for all sorts of reasons, and is sensibly happy to use any means which may come to hand. I met him recently plotting the re-release of Buñuel's *Adventures of Robinson Crusoe*. "Do you think," he worried, "I could bill it as 'Now for the first time, completely uncensored'?" Oh yes, it was for the first time completely uncensored all right; but, as he sadly explained, there seemed to be only about five seconds difference, consisting mainly of a rather unconvincing close-up of a mangled body on the beach. "And you know," he added, "the colour's gone very funny—seems the process used was unstable to begin with. Actually, I like it this way—it's somehow all of a piece. The problem is, how to get the customers in." His description on the handout is undeniably truthful: "Luis Buñuel's extraordinary film," it starts encouragingly, "in weird PathécOLOR." And for insurance, it was billed with *A Bout de Souffle*.

As a film-maker himself, of somewhat advanced tendencies—when he put on his own *Cut-Ups* in London he was delightedly counting the number of spectators who couldn't stand it and demanded their money back: "It shows we're really getting to them!"—he might be expected to proselytise for experimental cinema. But not a bit of it—or not very much. If one may see a central strand in his taste it is along *Mid-Minuit Fantastique* lines: Buñuel, horror



ANTONY BALCH.

and fantasy (his first big success as a distributor was only-now-it-can-be-shown *Freaks*), strip-cartoons (*Jeu de Massacre*). But then he was also the only British distributor to show any interest in Clair's last, *Les Fêtes Galantes*. "I know I shan't make any money out of it," he observed stoutly, "but it ought to be shown—it's so beautifully made."

He was quite right about the money, but it is rather endearing to see a distributor prepared to suffer for his ideals, especially when they are such improbable ones. Not that he did not do everything possible to fend off calamity with ingenious selling and as alluring an English title as he could think of. He is indeed a great believer in titles. At Cannes one year he liked *Au Hasard Balthazar* a lot, and brooded lengthily about how it could be sold if he were to buy it. Finally, inspiration struck: "I know, I'd call it *This Beast is Not for Beating*. It's fair, it's true, but at the same time . . . well, a hint of flagellation can't do any harm at the box-office, can it?"

On another occasion, having taken over a Finnish sex film with some fairly innocuous title, he spent an hour or so working through all possible permutations of 'skin' and 'teeth', which he had decided were selling words. "*Skin Teeth? Second Skin? False Skin? False Teeth?*" were all considered and sadly rejected before he finally hit on *Skin Skin*. "It's simple, alliterative, memorable. It doesn't mean anything but it sounds sexy. Wait a minute, does Finland count as Scandinavia?" Yes, we said, we thought it did. "Simple: I can bill it as '*Skin Skin, Scandinavia's sex sensation*.'" Which, very successfully, he did. And truth to tell, the film really wasn't at all bad either.

Equally, at times he can be extraordinarily disarming: there is something rather touching, and very Tony Balch, about the

note appended to *Thoughts of Chairman Mao* in his last programme leaflet: "In Chinese—no subtitles. Contains some amazing footage of the Chinese Hydrogen Bomb tests and the Chinese warriors (*sic*) all dressed up in plastic suits and goggles. In colour. We are showing it because no one else will."

I GATHER THAT Wardour Street is at long, long last beginning to wonder if there isn't something in what the rest of us have been saying all these years about the possible money to be got from minority audiences for minority films if they are properly exploited. Which need not, any more, mean a complete circuit release. With not too expensively budgeted films it may quite well be possible to pile up a nice little profit from an extended West End run, carefully timed showings in selected situations—university towns, arty suburbs, what the *Kine Weekly* used to call carriage trade halls—and a rapid follow-up with release to film societies and such. If you consider the possibilities of a film like *Fahrenheit 451* in such terms, it is obvious that it might have managed that way to achieve a perfectly respectable, if hardly record-breaking, commercial career instead of languishing, as it did, almost entirely unshown.

But if, suddenly, the idea of a selective 'art film' release seems attractive to Wardour Street, one cannot help wondering how it will turn out in practice. There are, after all, two evident imponderables: in the choice of films to be given this treatment, and in the types of audiences that will be sought for them. Any film critic will tell you of the hurt he sometimes sees in distributors' eyes when he has to admit that he did not like some particularly tedious Greek peasant drama, French puzzle-film or the like. No, of course they didn't like it themselves, they say, but they were therefore sure it must be a 'critics' film'. What might the big companies see as potential art-film offerings? *Candy? A Midsummer Night's Dream? The Sergeant?* Or merely any film which looked a risky proposition on an ordinary commercial release, whatever the reasons for this—special quality or no quality at all?

And what about the audiences these 'special' films will be directed at? After all, there is no such thing as the minority public, any more than there is the public in general. Rather less, in fact. There are innumerable minority publics, all worth exploiting if they can be got at. There are, for example, the publics for opera and ballet films, for blow-by-blow filmed accounts of sporting events, for respectful adaptations of the classics, for Shakespeare on film, for experimental cinema, for agitprop cinema, for all sorts of strange things. There is no doubt some overlapping, but it seems likely that the audience for *If . . .* is very different from that for *The Secret Life of an American Wife* (to take only the two most successful minority films of the last few months). And *If . . .*, of course, unlike its stable-companion *Charlie Bubbles*, is now a big major circuit release.

If Wardour Street is going to look for a simple formula by which any 'minority film' can be sold without individual consideration, it will probably be coming back to us in a few months, muttering, "There you are, we always knew this 'minority audience' of yours was a myth." Which would be not only a pity, but a criminal waste.

ARKADIN

BOOK REVIEWS

WITH EISENSTEIN IN HOLLYWOOD, by Ivor Montagu. Illustrated. (Seven Seas Books, distributed in Britain by Collet's, 6s.)

ONE OF THE ODDEST byways of film history has always been the visit of Eisenstein, Alexandrov and Tisse to America in 1930. The outline is familiar enough: the year's leave of absence from the U.S.S.R.; the European wanderings and the Hollywood contract with Paramount; the unrealised scenarios; the abortive film for Upton Sinclair in Mexico; the belated return, rather as prodigals than as heroes. But the basic outline leaves a lot of hows and whys which are only now answered by Ivor Montagu's invaluable and highly entertaining book.

Montagu first met the Soviet trio at a conference of *cinéma de l'avant-garde* at La Sarras. Later, when he went to Hollywood to try to work in films, he paved the way for the Eisenstein group's trip and helped fix up the Paramount contract. He worked with them on the scenarios, and was witness to the frustration of the group's hopes to realise them. He remained a close collaborator and, with his wife, formed part of the extraordinary little household, up to the time that Eisenstein departed for Mexico. Thus he is a first-hand witness of the entire adventure and, as it turns out, an unusually perceptive one as well. His story is not only an invaluable new document on Eisenstein's creative and personal biography (there is a marvellous summation on Eisenstein in which Montagu compares him to Shaw's Dubedat: clearly Eisenstein's wit and charm and ability to stimulate went with an unnerving streak of cruelty and a ruthlessness in subordinating personal relationships to his work). It is also, unexpectedly, an extraordinarily charming, often extremely funny essay of personal reminiscence.

Mr. Montagu tells the most disarming stories against his own 26-year-old self, such as his disastrous experience on an inaugural cross-continental flight, with mayoral receptions and news cameras at every touch-down, and "me, advertising the amenities of the new line by being sick in the background." There are endearing stories of the Russians' adventures in Europe and the States: Alexandrov and Tisse rushing gratefully into a door whose message they mistakenly read as "Laddies"; Eisenstein enthusiastically exploring European sexual institutions; their rather fraught Hollywood housekeeping on a small budget somewhat strained by Eisenstein's book-buying sprees.

Much, too, about Hollywood in its most splendid and foolish era: Paramount's staff bootlegger; Montagu's fruitless efforts to convince the studio that even in Moscow it was not snowing in August 1914; the ideal Garbo script that—in keeping with the logic of the industry—had to be junked because it had not cost enough to write; Sam Goldwyn's classic third-person request to Eisenstein (he could not believe a Russian could speak English): "Please tell Mr. Eisenstein that I have seen his film *Potemkin* and admire it very much. What we should like would be for him to do something of the kind, but rather cheaper, for Ronald Colman." There are illuminating anecdotes of meetings with Fairbanks and Pickford and Chaplin.

Still more important, of course, are the famous, but until now unpublished, scripts for *Sutter's Gold* and *An American Tragedy*—produced, as Mr. Montagu describes, by a sort of production line beginning with Eisenstein, going through Alexandrov and Mr. and Mrs. Montagu to finish up with the Paramount typists. The resulting scenarios make interesting reading, but it is impossible to judge what sort of films would ultimately have come out of them. Film scenarios can be very misleading; it is exactly that gulf between the written word and the realised film, which we in our ordinary imaginations cannot bridge, that is precisely the measure of the director's creative contribution. In any case it is hard to know in what degree these particular scripts were addressed towards studio heads who had consciously bought Art when they hired Eisenstein and Co.

Read cold, both these scenarios give the impression of being conceived by a silent director, narrative images being overlaid with ideas for expressionist sound conceived on strictly theoretical bases. (What else, of course, should they be at this point in Eisenstein's career?) The overlaid voices of conscience and public whisper and the 'symphonies of sounds' now strike a certain chill. Both scripts too suffer from rather loose, still novel-like structure, and over-reliance on coincidence. Yet there are hints of Eisenstein visions that might have lifted them clear off the page and into marvels: the epic scenes in *Sutter*; the extraordinarily post-Resnais feel of the scene where Clyde, the hero of *An American Tragedy*, is beset with thoughts of murder: "... he acts separately from the background which keeps changing after him, either dashing in a mad tempo when the background is slow, then falling when there is no reason to fall, then unsteady on a rock, then transformed into stone-like motionlessness in the midst of a busy street..." A hint, too, of *Sherlock Junior*?

Add to all this some charming unknown photographs of the trip, scenario sketches from *An American Tragedy*, and a ridiculous sketch, "Roberta sitting on her trunk", in which Eisenstein irreverently sends up one of the sombrest moments of his own scenario; and you have a truly sensational six bob's worth. A book that is at once classic and fun.

DAVID ROBINSON

WORD AND IMAGE, History of the Hungarian Cinema, by Istvan Nemeskürty. (Corvina Press, Budapest/Clematis, London, 42s.)

IT IS A refreshing change to have a film history written by a filmmaker. Four years ago Istvan Nemeskürty, after a training in literary and historical studies (which, by the way, he has no intention of relinquishing), became the 'producer' for one of the groups at Hungary's chief film studio. The first film that he helped to bring into the world was Jancsó's *The Round-Up*, which alone should give us confidence in his taste and opinions.

The thesis of Nemeskürty's book is that the Hungarian cinema both enjoys and suffers from an unusually close relationship to literature. Left uncontrolled by sensitive film-makers or by writers with a vision of film potentialities, Hungarian films have had some wordy periods that Nemeskürty does not dismiss with a polite gesture; he examines the mistakes with as much zest and insight as he applies to the happier years of his country's cinema. He makes us want to see more Hungarian films; especially tantalising are his carefully gleaned exceptions to the worst periods. How did they get made in the face of all the defined obstacles?

It's a strange experience to plunge into a country's film history about which most of us know nothing. Without subscribing to the heroic mode in which such histories are usually cast, this book is packed not only with information, but information relevant to a modern, foreign reader who has just discovered that Hungary, too, makes films worth looking at; this book has been planned and written in an enviably easy style. One of the many sections completely new to me was the exciting detail on the brief period of enthusiastic co-operation of Hungary's best writers and film artists after the revolution of 1919. For four months, from April to August, a nationalised, socialist film industry existed for the first time in history. (Soviet film production was not nationalised until August 1919.) In this time thirty-one films were made. Though the soldiers of Horthy ended the brief revolution in blood and fear (awarding special attention to the film enthusiasts), the summer of 1919 showed the Hungarian cinema what it was capable of. Among the film-makers whose contributions to the new socialist cinema forced them to escape from Hungary were Sándor Korda (making the book essential for readers interested in the career of Sir Alexander Korda), Mihály Kertész (who became a pillar of the Austrian and American film industries as Michael Curtiz), László Vajda and Béla Lugosi. Béla Balázs, not yet connected with films, also had to flee. Only one of the thirty-one films has survived (because it was sent at the time to Moscow), and this appears to have been one of the less significant of the group. The others remain a steadily dimming memory, and Nemeskürty has gathered here all he can learn about the Hungarian cinema's first great summer.

The amount of original research in this book must have surprised Hungarian readers, too. Nemeskürty has found a forgotten and obscurely published experimental film script by Moholy-Nagy, dated Berlin 1921/22 (reproduced in full). Of equal importance is his stimulating analysis of the art of a comedian we have never seen—Gyula Kabos. I hope he will become an international discovery, with the help of the Hungarian Film Institute. The part of the book many will turn to first—about Hungary's films since the end of the war, in particular those since the second nationalisation of 1948—offers a model for disciplined and frank examination of the films nearest to the author.

JAY LEYDA

MICHAEL BALCON PRESENTS... A LIFETIME OF FILMS, by Michael Balcon. Illustrated. (Hutchinson, 50s.)

THE MEMOIRS OF Sir Michael Balcon, producer of some 300 films since 1922, head of Ealing, one-time chairman of British Lion, veteran of the great wars of the British film industry, and the man who gave Hitchcock his first chance to direct a picture. Balcon has never been one for the paraphernalia of tycoonery, and there is nothing here of the edulcorated anecdotes of ghost writers and PR men. It's a direct, unadorned book; and at the end perhaps rather a sad one, since after all the years of battling away to keep British films British, and the decade or so when he made little suburban Ealing one of the best-known studios anywhere, he looks around at what for him is the wasteland of a cinema 90 per cent dependent on American finance.

Balcon himself has probably never changed: a resolute, pragmatic, undemonstrative Midlander with a passion for the cinema. But just what kind of passion? Reticence can be a handicap in an autobiographer and on almost the last page he's appealingly admitting that "my efforts to depict myself as I really am haven't been a great success so far." Even the report on the Ealing years somehow suggests discreet headmasterly recollection rather than the impresario urge. Yet the absolutely distinctive studio style obviously began with Balcon, and in a characteristically quiet way he has been a great discoverer of actors. Warmth comes through most when he's writing about colleagues—like Pen Tennyson, the young Ealing director killed in the war. And Sir Michael can be unexpectedly, drily funny: "Becoming a Rank outsider was like being demoted from an order of chivalry... Lord Rank once told me that he prayed for me nightly, no doubt along with a number of others, but I have a feeling I was removed from that list too." There's also a vintage Louis B. Mayer story, of the old man keeling over in a dead faint, having lunched somewhat too well, at the height of one of those M-G-M staff presentations to himself of which he was so fond. Consternation all round, except for the studio orchestra, who in the best sinking ship tradition went thundering on with 'For He's a Jolly Good Fellow'.

PENELOPE HOUSTON

BOOKS RECEIVED

THE CRAZY MIRROR. By Raymond Durnat. (Faber and Faber, 45s.)
LES ENFANTS DU PARADIS. Translation by Dinah Brooke. (Lorrimer, 20s.)

ESSAIS SUR LA SIGNIFICATION DU CINEMA. By Christian Metz. (Klincksieck, Paris, 21 F.)

MOVIES ON TV. Edited by Steven H. Scheuer. (Corgi, 7s 6d.)

THE PICTURE PALACE. By Dennis Sharp. (Hugh Evelyn, 75s.)

VERONICA. By Veronica Lake with Donald Bain. (W. H. Allen, 36s.)

FILMED BOOKS AND PLAYS, by A. G. S. Enser, advertised in our Winter issue, is published by André Deutsch at 84s. The price was omitted from the advertisement.

CORRESPONDENCE

In Search of Lost Time: an Open Letter

The Editor, SIGHT AND SOUND

SIR,—Film history has a unique opportunity to recover some of its lost past, if success comes to a project currently being considered by Professor Leo Kuleshov of the Moscow Film Institute (VGIK). Kuleshov, whose 70th birthday was on January 1, 1969, is one of the leading film pioneers in the world. He became famous as the first experimental director in the Soviet Union around 1920, influencing or teaching directly such men as Eisenstein, Vertov and Pudovkin. He also directed some of the first major Soviet features—*Engineer Prite's Project* (1917), *Extraordinary Adventures of Mr. West in the Land of the Bolsheviks* (1924), *The Death Ray* (1925), and *By the Law* (1925).

The above features have been preserved in the USSR, but Kuleshov's most famous films have long since been lost. These are his experimental short subjects, made in 1918–20, in which he developed his theories of editing—later to be called 'Russian montage'. These shorts—*The Mozhukhin Effect*, *Ideal Woman*, *Cinematic Ballet Dance*, and *Artificial Landscape*—have been

discussed in numerous books on the history of motion pictures, but no one except Kuleshov and his early students ever got to see them (the only copies were lost in World War Two).

I recently wrote Kuleshov and suggested that he should consider remaking these film experiments now, working at the film studio of the Moscow Film Institute where he teaches, and using the assistance of his current students. Even though the resulting film(s) would not be the original, it would still be a work 'by the hand of the master' and in that sense authentic. Furthermore, who but Kuleshov himself could reconstruct his own experiments?

It would be hoped that copies of the resulting film(s) could be available to film museums in various countries, so that all those interested in the history of the cinema would have the chance to see the experiments which can now only be read about in books.

In reply to my suggestion, Kuleshov wrote the following on July 7, 1968: "The idea of reshooting the 'experiments' is excellent—if I live and keep my health, I'll try to accomplish it. It would be good to send a request about this to the Moscow Film Institute from film scholars and directors in various countries. This would make it easier to conduct the experiments, and would not appear to be just a whim of mine."

If enough support for this idea reaches the Film Institute (VGIK) from film-makers, teachers, students, and devotees, let us hope that Kuleshov will be able to carry it through, so that we can all enjoy and learn from this work.

Write to: Moscow 1-328

3-i Selskokhoziastvenny pr., 3

Kinoinstitut VGIK

Rektoru Groshevu A.N.

(Soviet Union)

The sooner and the more letters sent to Moscow, the better the project's chances.

Yours faithfully,

University of Illinois.

JAY LEYDA and STEVEN P. HILL

Miles Mander

SIR,—Darrel Catling does well to draw attention to the work of this writer/director/actor. If he had consulted *The Film Till Now*, Mr. Catling would have found a considered estimate of this gifted film-maker, especially of his film *The Firstborn* (with Madeleine Carroll), more important than those quoted in his letter. I must have been one of the very few who saw this film before its producers massacred it. Miles Mander also scripted several films, in which I was his co-writer, including the second version of *The Lodger*, *The Mystery of the Marie Celeste* (unmade) for Julius Hagen, and *The Red Dawn*, from a story by Chaplin commissioned by a Greek impresario who claimed to have had Chaliapin under contract for a film. Miles was a man of great wit, immense charm and a filmic skill unrecognised in England. He died of a stroke in Hollywood in 1946.

Yours faithfully,

Wendover, Bucks.

PAUL ROTH

ACKNOWLEDGMENTS

20th CENTURY-FOX for *Justine*, *Pretty Poison*, *The Bible: In the Beginning*, *Heaven Knows, Mr. Allison*.

UNITED ARTISTS for *The Shame*, *The Bride Wore Black*.

PARAMOUNT PICTURES for *Oh! What a Lovely War*, *Sullivan's Travels*.

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WARNER/SEVEN ARTS/PHIL FELDMAN for *The Wild Bunch*.

RANK FILM DISTRIBUTORS for *Coogan's Bluff*, *Freud: The Secret Passion*, *The List of Adrian Messenger*.

RANK/UNIVERSAL PICTURES for *Isadora*, *Secret Ceremony*, *Boom, Sweet Charity*.

UNIVERSAL PICTURES for Hitchcock on the set of *Torn Curtain*.

M-G-M for *North by Northwest*.

FILMS MARCEAU/COCINOR for *L'Amour Fou*.

FILMS DU CARROSSE for *La Sirène du Mississippi*.

ANGLO-ENTREPRISE/VINEYARD for Truffaut on the set of *Fahrenheit 451*.

LILY VAN DEN BERGH for *Alice's Restaurant*.

ANTONY BALCH for photograph of Tony Balch.

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GLORIA SWANSON

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assumed that with a young director, a young writer and so on, naturally De Sica would be helping them on the story and direction. This picture . . . I had never really had the experience of psychosomatic illness before, but I had it on this picture. One day I walked and my leg went bonk, down I went. Nothing the matter, nothing. The next day, a pain. Finally that went away and I got sick. Then they had snow for the first time in twenty years in Rome. Five blizzards. There was no oil in the house and I had to go to the hospital to get warm and keep going on the picture. I was never so embarrassed, never so miserable in my life. With a man like De Sica being called at 9 o'clock in the morning, and by 7 or 8 o'clock at night we still hadn't done one scene. I soon said, "Look, I can't take this. I can get pneumonia. I'm home, I'm made up, it takes me twenty minutes to get here by car. When you want me, you telephone and I'll come." So they'd call me at 5 o'clock, please come. Maybe at 7 or 8 o'clock they'd get around to it, or maybe they wouldn't.

Then there was a man called Sordi who, like all comedians—I've found this out since, I should have known it before—had an idea that if there was a pause in the dialogue, he must do something. So when he wasn't snorting or grunting, he was scratching his head or something. So that you kept looking at this jumping-jack. Well, he was an Italian, so maybe that's their way of doing things. But for me there was no way of giving even a performance with this man. So that Mr. De Sica and I wound up playing stooge to a comic. When it was all over, De Sica came to see my apartment because he was thinking of renting it after me. He said, "I must ask you one thing. Why did you get yourself involved in that picture?" I looked at him: "You mean you don't know? I only went into it because *you* were in it." "Ahhhhhh!" he said. "I went into it because *you* were in it." "Well," I said, "we're two silly people. Why couldn't we have talked beforehand. . . .?"

* * *

Why don't you tell a gal when you're going to take pictures? I'll tell you what: if you just put a soft lens on it and don't come up here and photograph my nostrils, it's all right. Go ahead and take a few little pictures. You'll be happy about it even if I won't. Because if you don't take some, God knows what pictures they'll use from the morgue.

No, no, no. I am not going to write my memoirs. Because I want to become famous as the one and only who hasn't. Everyone writes their memoirs. I don't want an epitaph on my grave.

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FILM GUIDE

Films of special interest to *SIGHT AND SOUND* readers are denoted by one, two, three or four stars.

*****BEFORE THE REVOLUTION** (*Contemporary*) Bernardo Bertolucci's film, now five years old, about the sentimental and political education of a young upper class Italian. Stendhalian, operatic, allusive; a dazzling performance by a young director at full stretch. (Francesco Barilli, Adriana Asti.)

***BUONA SERA, MRS. CAMPBELL** (*United Artists*) Moderately amusing comedy about three American airmen on a return visit to an Italian village and how they don't discover which of them is the father of Gina Lollobrigida's daughter. Good performances and a lively script, but the sentimental finale is a bit of a let-down. (Phil Silvers, Shelley Winters, Peter Lawford, Telly Savalas; director, Melvin Frank. Technicolor.)

CANDY (*C.I.R.O.*) Terry Southern's witty, pornographic parable loses its satirical edge and emerges as a vulgar, gaudy and grimly humourless fantasy which, with its conscious nods to Lewis Carroll, might more suitably be titled *Through The Looking Glass Darkly*. (Ewa Aulin, Marlon Brando, Walter Matthau; director, Christian Marquand. Technicolor.)

*****FUNNY GIRL** (*Columbia*) In her first film, Barbra Streisand gives an intense, hilarious and impeccably timed performance as the ugly duckling from Brooklyn who finds fame as a Ziegfeld star and sadness in her marriage to a gambler. William Wyler's intelligent direction combines with Isobel Lennart's pithy script to sustain interest between musical numbers. (Omar Sharif, Walter Pidgeon. Technicolor, Panavision 70.) *Reviewed.*

HELLFIGHTERS (*Rank*) Plot-bound saga of loves and loyalties, with laconic men savouring the dangers of a virile trade (extinguishing oil-well fires) while their womenfolk worry. Hawks might have made something of it. (John Wayne, Jim Hutton, Katharine Ross; director, Andrew V. McLaglen. Technicolor, Panavision.)

*****HELL IN THE PACIFIC** (*C.I.R.O.*) Morality playlet about clash between Japanese sailor and American pilot stranded alone on Pacific atoll during World War II. Begins and ends with a good deal of significance but the middle is cool, observant and drily witty. (Lee Marvin, Toshiro Mifune; director, John Boorman. Technicolor, Panavision.)

I LOVE YOU, ALICE B. TOKLAS (*Warner-Pathé*) Peter Sellers has a few funny moments as an asthmatic Jewish lawyer who freaks out when he falls in love with a flower-child in yet another of Hollywood's tedious trips to Hippydom. (Leigh Taylor-Young, Joyce Van Patten; director, Hy Averback. Technicolor.)

*****ISADORA** (*Rank*) Karel Reisz' brave but almost inevitably unsuccessful attempt to define the Isadora Duncan legend for posterity. Fine visual flow in the first half, but tedious sets in and the lady will indeed be remembered for her love affairs rather than her dancing. (Vanessa Redgrave, Jason Robards, James Fox. Technicolor, Panavision.) *Reviewed.*

JOANNA (*Fox*) Excruciatingly tiresome modern morality tale about a provincial innocent who comes down to the Big City and learns about Life the hard way. Director Michael Sarne plumbs the lower depths of swinging British cinema and is evidently enamoured of Lelouch. Enough said. (Genevieve Waite, Christian Doerner, Calvin Lockhart. DeLuxe Colour, Panavision.)

***KURONEKO** (*Cinecinta*) Japanese ghost story, about two spectral ladies with a habit of turning themselves into cats to take a bite out of passing

samurai. Nice idea; rather soporific execution. (Kichimom Nakamura, Nobuko Otowa; director, Kaneto Shindo. Tohoscope.)

MIDSUMMER NIGHT'S DREAM, A (*Eagle*) Peter Hall's unhappy attempt to film the complete text, while his Royal Shakespeare Company cast gambol about the Warwickshire woods with mud all over their faces. Sebastian Shaw's Quince survives the dislocations and distractions better than anyone else. (David Warner, Paul Rogers, Diana Rigg. Eastman Colour.)

MR. FREEDOM (*Cinecinta*) A wooden script and some tiresome camera tricks keep William Klein's Ubu-esque pop parable about American imperialism well away from the cutting edge. Only Delphine Seyrig's playful performance as a patriotic putain relieves the tedium of the rhetorical ramblings. (John Abbey, Donald Pleasence. Eastman Colour.)

***NIGHT OF THE FOLLOWING DAY, THE** (*Rank*) Kidnap thriller, set among the sand dunes near Le Touquet, with realistic suspense devices mainly defused and attempt to establish instead a mood of wavery, dreamy apprehension. Interesting try; but the direction wavers too. (Marlon Brando, Richard Boone, Rita Moreno; director, Hubert Cornfield. Technicolor.) *Reviewed.*

****OEDIPUS REX** (*Eagle*) Pasolini's wild and woolly (literally) rendering of Sophocles as a ritual of primitive savagery in the sun-scorched Moroccan desert. Occasionally risible, sometimes stunning. (Franco Citti, Silvana Mangano. Technicolor.)

OH DAD, POOR DAD, MAMMA'S HUNG YOU IN THE CLOSET AND I'M FEELIN' SO SAD (*Paramount*) Dad is less to be pitied than Arthur Kopit, whose fragile fantasy (shy son beset by vampiric mother trailing piranha fish, Venus flytraps and a coffin) has been cheapened, coarsened and ground down with facetiousness. (Rosalind Russell, Robert Morse; director, Richard Quine. Technicolor.)

***PARTY, THE** (*United Artists*) Peter Sellers as a small, maladroit Indian actor spreading havoc at a Hollywood party. Thoughtful, Tati-style exercise in the tactics of clowning. Not unsympathetic; but not very funny either. (Claudine Longet, Marge Champion; director, Blake Edwards. DeLuxe Color, Panavision.)

*****PARTY AND THE GUESTS, THE** (*Contemporary*) Cool-nerved, elliptical political fable by Jan Nemec, in which a woodland picnic party find themselves guests or prisoners of a Lenin-bearded gentleman at his alfresco banquet. Dissection of the anatomy of conformism, in a setting of ominous elegance. (Ivan Vyskocil, Jan Klusák.)

****PRETTY POISON** (*Fox*) Uneven black comedy, shakily scripted and directed but with splendid performances from Anthony Perkins and Tuesday Weld as an ex-arsonist and the high school sweetheart who takes to his fantasies so cheerfully that she involves him in multiple murder. (Beverly Garland, John Randolph; director, Noel Black. DeLuxe Colour.) *Reviewed.*

***PRIME OF MISS JEAN BRODIE, THE** (*Fox*) Maggie Smith gives a splendid performance as the histrionic Edinburgh schoolmistress with artistic aspirations, and Pamela Franklin is impressive as the pupil who rebels against her insidious influence. But the opening scenes are devised too emphatically for comic effect and Ronald Neame directs with heavy-handed subservience to the witty and precise script. (Robert Stephens, Gordon Jackson, Celia Johnson. DeLuxe Colour.)

****QUEEN, THE** (*Contemporary*) A disciplined, down-beat documentary about the national finals of America's drag queen beauty contest that manages to be compassionate and amusing without cheap sensationalism or sentimentality. (Jack Doroshow, Richard Finocchio; director, Frank Simon. Technicolor.)

*****RED AND THE WHITE, THE** (*Academy*) Another masterful game of cinematic chess from Miklós Jancsó, this time set during the Russian Civil War. Cool, detached, bird's-eye view of men caught up in the crossfire of war, enthralling to watch even if it hasn't quite the hypnotic fascination of *The Round-up*. (András Kozák, József Madaras, Tibor Molnár. Agascope.)

RED MANTLE, THE (*Cinecinta*) Glum Norse saga, about an Icelandic Romeo and Juliet destroyed by a vendetta among the fjords. Some fine rugged settings, but the direction, aiming at legendary starkness and simplicity, ends up

looking merely simple. (Gitte Haenning, Oleg Vidov, Gunnar Björnstrand; director, Gabriel Axel. In Colour, CinemaScope.)

****RUNAWAY, THE** (*Contemporary*) Extremely engaging Indian film, based on a gently nostalgic Tagore story about the quirkish adventures of a boy who keeps running away to see the world. (Partha Mukherji; director, Tapan Sinha.) *Reviewed.*

SERGEANT, THE (*Warner-Pathé*) Faintly ludicrous, certainly overwrought study of martinet sergeant (Rod Steiger) who falls in love with handsome private (John Phillip Law), and as a result disgraces himself by appearing drunk on parade. (Ludmila Mikael; director, John Flynn. Technicolor.)

*****SHAME, THE** (*United Artists*) Bergman's haunting and convincing nightmare about the corrosive effects of war on human dignity and human compassion. Fantastic performances from Liv Ullmann and Max von Sydow. (Gunnar Björnstrand.) *Reviewed.*

***SINNING URGE, THE** (*Cinecinta*) Another adaptation by Hans Abramson (*The Serpent*) of a Stig Dagerman novel, this one about an uncomfortable ménage à trois in contemporary Stockholm. Surprisingly understated, at times almost Pinteresque, though significance will keep breaking through. (Hans Ernbäck, Bente Dessau, Keve Hjelm. Eastman Colour.)

SITUATION HOPELESS — BUT NOT SERIOUS (*Paramount*) Rather laboured adaptation of Robert Shaw's *The Hiding Place*, with small town German Alec Guinness secreting two American airmen in his cellar and keeping them there years after the war is over. Idea potentially good; execution like an Ealing comedy without the bite. (Michael Connors, Robert Redford; director, Gottfried Reinhardt.)

***STALKING MOON, THE** (*Warner-Pathé*) Eva Marie Saint as white woman rescued after ten years with the Indians, being chased by her son's rampaging Apache father. Subdued, homely Western, sympathetic but a bit devitalised. (Gregory Peck, Robert Forster; director, Robert Mulligan. Technicolor, Panavision.) *Reviewed.*

****SWEET CHARITY** (*Rank*) Episodic structure and incongruous economic fatalism betray the Fellini origins of this American musical version of *Nights of Cabiria*. Shirley MacLaine gives a spirited performance as the taxi-dancer with the hotel-sized heart and director/choreographer Bob Fosse creates some stunning ensemble numbers. (Ricardo Montalban, John McMartin, Chita Rivera. Technicolor, Panavision 70.) *Reviewed.*

****TARGETS** (*Paramount*) First feature by Peter Bogdanovich, about a middle-class American boy who murders his family and then runs amok with a rifle. Coolly alarming when it stays with the sniper; a bit muddled when it tries to make a significant link-up with the nostalgic world of screen horror. (Boris Karloff, Tim O'Kelly, Nancy Hsueh. Pathé Color.)

TWENTY-FOUR HOURS IN A WOMAN'S LIFE (*Academy/Connoisseur*) Stefan Zweig's story of a society lady's bitter-sweet infatuation with a young gambler, one of Max Ophüls' unrealised projects. Starts on the right key, but rapidly disintegrates into a delirious homage to Ophüls. Danielle Darrieux tries hard, but is engulfed by waves of self-conscious prettiness. (Robert Hoffman; director, Dominique Delouche. Eastman Colour.)

***UP TIGHT** (*Paramount*) Re-working of *The Informer* in terms of Black Power. Some nice, moody photography by Boris Kaufman, but under Jules Dassin's high-octane direction the entire cast seems to be carrying on like Melina Mercouri. (Raymond St. Jacques, Ruby Dee, Julian Mayfield. Technicolor.)

WHERE EAGLES DARE (M-G-M) Magnificently nonsensical blockbuster with Richard Burton and Clint Eastwood taking on half the Wehrmacht in a hair-brained scheme to rescue an Allied officer from an impregnable Bavarian castle in the skies. Obviously intended as a spoof (spot the deliberate mistakes), but only Burton seems to have got the message. (Mary Ure, Patrick Wymark; director, Brian G. Hutton. Metrocolor, Panavision 70.)

WONDERWALL (*Cinecinta*) Hellish brew concocted out of absent-minded professor jokes, simple-minded psychedelics and synthetic Oriental music, in which Jack MacGowan (the professor) gazes entranced (poor soul) through hole in wall at supposedly swinging goings-on next door. (Jane Birkin, Iain Quarrier; director, Joe Massot. Eastman Colour.)

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